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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

"THE LITTLE MAN TRAPPER"

by Grover Kidwell

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"The Little Man Trapper"

by Grover Kidwell

CHAPTER ONE

THE freckled, fifteen-year-old son of "Big" Alf Miller, who sold moonshine whisky in a two-room shack on the side of Log Mountain, turned abruptly from a rocky trail along which he had been running and hurried down a ridge toward a house on the edge of a small farm. He was pale under his freckles and his blue eyes shone with excitement. He panted as if he had run fast. He wore a battered straw hat which was full of holes, and through one of the holes a tuft of yellow hair stuck out. The legs of his loose-fitting trousers were rolled well above his ankles, and one narrow leather strap, passing over his right shoulder, was all that kept them in place. The upper part of his body was protected only by a thin undershirt, and it was rather dirty. A loving mountain mother, who had died when he was five years old, had named him "Prince."

It was early morning. There was silence in the woods and about the big house and its thirty acres of cleared ground.

Prince Miller came out of the growth and sprang across a wagon road in two leaps. He jerked open the gate in front of old Henry Lynch's home and ran swiftly along a footpath. Scorning the big wooden steps, he leaped to the high, wide porch with the agility of a panther and, approaching the nearest door, rapped loudly.

"Hello!" he cried. "Hello, Mister Lynch! Ain't nobody up yet?"

A door at the far end of the porch opened suddenly, and Henry Lynch's middle-aged housekeeper, a Mrs. Perkins, stared at the visitor with plain displeasure.

"Yes, they's somebody up, you noisy brat!" she said sharply. "If they wasn't somebody up, they wouldn't be smoke comin' out the kitchen chimney, would they? Now answer me that."

"Answer you nothin', woman! Don't stan' thar and quarrel with me at a time like this! Where's Mister Lynch? Tell him to come out here plum' quick! Lord A'mighty!"

"Less noise, Prince Miller! You hear me, sir? I've jist been upstairs to call Mister Lynch and Carl White to breakfast, and I think they're dressin' now. What's eatin' on you, Prince Miller? What you so excited about?"

"Oh, maybe I ain't as much excited as you think. I reckon you'd be a lot excited, though, if you had jist found a dead man."

"A dead man?" The woman lifted her hands in horror. "You've jist found a *dead* man?"

"I didn't say nothin' else. And the dead man is Mister Lynch's boy, Joe."

The sharp-featured woman gave a little scream. She turned and ran through the house.

Having told of his gruesome find, the boy felt relieved. He fished a plug of tobacco from his hip pocket and dexterously ripped a corner from it with his yellow teeth. He chewed thoughtfully as he waited.

Presently old Henry Lynch, gray-haired, bent with age, and moving with a limp, came out on the porch. His thin lips were trembling and tears were already flooding his dim old eyes.

He was followed by Mrs. Perkins and a young man. The latter was the Carl White whom she had mentioned. He was a distant relative of Henry Lynch, and for more than two years had made his home with the farmer.

He appeared almost as deeply affected as was old Henry Lynch. His dark eyes gleamed and his big hands, the left one minus the thumb, which had been cut off close to the palm, closed and unclosed as he looked at the ragged boy who had brought such terrible news.

Carl's friendship with Joe had been of long standing. They had been steadfast companions—had worked together, hunted together, fished together, gone to dances together. Sometimes strangers had mistaken them for brothers.

"Tell us about it, boy," he said, for the old man seemed unwilling to speak first. Plainly he was trying not to break down completely. "Are you sure Joe's dead?" and Carl's rich voice quavered on the dreadful word. "Are you sure, boy—plum' sure?"

Prince Miller was very sure. His story was brief. His father, Big Alf Miller, had awakened him at dawn and told him to go to Pioneer, four miles away, for a supply of groceries. After a hasty breakfast with his father Prince had departed on his errand, and a little while later, at a point where the trail led between two ridges, a mile and a half from his home, he had found the body of a man. It was lying at the side of the trail. There was blood on the dead man's back and on his neck. The sight had frightened Prince badly, but he had lifted the man's head and taken a look at his face. Then he had run.

That was Prince Miller's story.

Old Henry Lynch drew a handkerchief and brushed it across his dimly seeing eyes. The toil-worn fingers that held it trembled as if from the cold.

"I wondered why my Joe didn't git back from Jacksboro last night," he said brokenly. "I expected him, fer he said he'd be here afore twelve. I thought maybe, though, that he decided to stay at Jacksboro till mornin'. Oh, Lordy! How I wish he had!"

Carl White stepped quickly to the old man's side and laid a hand on his shoulder. His dark eyes still gleamed and his brow was wrinkled in a frown. Plainly his blood was boiling. It would not have been hard for one to guess that he was already longing to take revenge upon the person who had killed his friend and kinsman.

"I guess it was robbery, Carl," Henry Lynch went on. "He went after five hundred dollars, you know, to make the second payment on his timberland."

"I was thinkin' of that, Uncle Henry. I reckon it wasn't robbery, though, without Joe flashed his roll somewhere. Surely he wouldn't 'a' done that. Nobody but you and me knowed he was goin' after the money. He could 'a' tole somebody on the way betwixt here and Jacksboro, of course, but that don't seem much likely."

Carl White continued to frown. His eyes were watching Prince Miller's freckled face. He seemed to wonder if the boy had told all he knew. After a moment he nodded his head slowly.

"It was hate, most likely," he said; and now he appeared to think more calmly, though his dark eyes still showed the emotion he felt. "We mustn't forgit that Joe had enemies, Uncle Henry. A few weeks back, you know, when I had trouble with George Taylor in the log-woods, Joe held a gun on him to keep him from knifin' me; and I know fer a fact that since then George Taylor has hated Joe and me. And then, too"—here Carl lifted a hand to his chin and hesitated—"then, too, there's Big Alf

Miller. It was last fall that him and Joe——"

"Not my dad, Carl," cried Prince suddenly, his blue eyes kindling. "It wasn't him that killed one of Joe's dogs last fall, when the houn's trailed a fox by our house. He made Joe sure it wasn't, and him and Joe has been good frien's ever since. No, sir; don't bring my dad in. He ain't a killer, my dad ain't, no matter what else folks might say about him."

"Don't git excited, Prince," White advised him, speaking kindly. "I'm jist tryin' to feel aroun' fer the truth, you know. I guess may be I oughtn't 'a' brought your dad's name in this; I know that Joe and him did git friendly with each other. I was about to tell Uncle Henry that Joe had to come by your dad's house and George Taylor's house, too, and they are both men that Joe has had trouble with. But this is no time fer us to stand talkin'," and here Carl turned to Henry Lynch. "You stay here, Uncle Henry, and I'll take Prince with me, and see to ever'thing. We'll git help and bring Joe home as quick as we can. And if I find out who killed him—well, you know how us Whites and Lynches have always been. If I git a chance at the man that killed Joe Lynch——"

"No, don't do nothin' reckless," the old man interrupted, his voice trembling. "If my boy has been murdered—and he has, of course—don't git yourself in any deep trouble about it. Since I've got old, Carl, and seen so much trouble and sufferin', I think a lot different from what I did when I was young. I loved Joe—nobody but me can know how much—but I'm willin' fer the law to deal with the man that killed him. Go ahead, Carl, and fetch him home."

Carl clamped his lips tightly. His big hands kept working. He glared at the woods above the house. The old man's words had surprised him.

"All right, Uncle Henry," he said. "We'll go across the ridge and git the deputy, Tom Coker, and take him with us. It won't be much out of our way. Come on, Prince."

There were lines on Prince Miller's freckled forehead as he followed White through the yard, across the wagon road, and up the ridge. Something was making his heart beat rapidly. Could it have been his father, after all, who had killed Joe Lynch? If Joe had been robbed, had Big Alf Miller robbed him? Would he have committed murder for five hundred dollars—or for any amount of money? Prince did not think so, but he was nevertheless frightened. The big, crude Alf Miller was inexpressibly dear to the lad's loyal heart. Big Alf was a friend, a chum, a partner. To Prince he was a "good" dad; he was steadfast and true. Prince knew that he could have, at any time, a half of anything his father might possess.

CHAPTER TWO

SHORTLY after Carl White and the boy left the house Mrs. Perkins stopped a neighboring woman who was passing and told her of Joe Lynch's death. The woman hurried home and told her husband, and a little later her husband told another man. In that way news often spreads quickly in the mountain districts of East Tennessee. This instance was no exception; and so, when Carl White, Prince Miller and the deputy sheriff, Tom Coker, reached the spot where Joe Lynch was killed they found that five or six men and as many boys had already gathered there. They had formed a rough circle about the body and were talking in subdued voices.

Deputy Sheriff Tom Coker was a heavily-built man with light-blue eyes and red hair. The sour expression stamped on his broad face suggested that he was not of a very friendly nature. From the first moment his searching eyes had looked at young Prince Miller with suspicion. He did not like the boy's father—not even a little bit. He knew, as did several other officers, that Big Alf Miller was a cunning lawbreaker who ought to be in jail. Several times he had made an attempt to "get the goods" on Big Alf for selling bootleg whisky, but so far the fellow had been too shrewd for him. Miller had not been accused of making the whisky himself, but he bought it from

moonshiners and retailed it by the pint, quart, or gallon. Most of his trade came from the villages of Pioneer and Red Ash, and he had been very careful to sell to the kind of men who couldn't be frightened into swearing evidence against him. And it was said of Big Alf that he was a mighty good judge of men.

Thinking of Miller as he did, and disliking him so much, it came natural for Tom Coker to wonder if Big Alf were not the person who killed Joe Lynch. Not, of course, that he intended to accuse him without sufficient reason. Tom Coker was not well liked, but men called him a "square-shooter."

The body of Lynch lay face downward at the edge of the trail. On the east side of the trail a ridge ended in a high cliff. On the other side there was a shallow ravine, a part of it thickly grown with bushes, and beyond this the end of another ridge rose steeply. Both ridges were densely wooded. Joe Lynch had been killed in a silent and lonely place.

The officer ordered the little crowd back, then knelt on the ground to examine the body. Lynch had been killed with a knife, having been stabbed once in the right side of the neck and once under the left shoulder-blade.

"This stab in the back is what fixed him," said Coker. "The knife must 'a' reached his heart. How much money did you say he had on him, Carl?"

Standing close together, Carl White and Prince Miller were watching the deputy intently. Both were leaning forward a little. Carl's dark eyes were glittering. Prince was chewing slowly on a man-size hunk of tobacco.

"He went to Jacksboro after five hundred dollars," White answered. "I guess it's about his clothes, all right."

Coker found nothing in the dead man's hip pockets. He turned the body over to continue the search, and under it a pint bottle lay on the ground. The cork was intact, but since the bottle was on the ground, it seemed that Lynch was about to take a drink at the moment when he was stabbed.

Prince Miller caught his breath and started. He noticed that the cork was wrapped with a bit of paper to make it fit tightly into the neck of the bottle, and it hadn't been so very long since Prince had seen a bottle which was corked exactly like this one. In fact, he had put the cork in himself.

With a grunt the officer picked up the bottle. He looked at it a moment before dropping it into his coat pocket. Then his eyes sought Prince Miller's freckled face.

"Did Joe Lynch stop at your house last night?" he inquired.

"Not as I know of." Prince met the officer's eyes squarely, but his heart was thumping wildly against his side. What had he done? Had he carried the news of a murder which had been committed by his own father? If he had, his father had wanted it done; that was plain. He couldn't believe his father was a killer—a cowardly murderer—and yet his fear for Big Alf was increasing each moment.

"Why, Tom Coker?" he asked, frowning under the officer's searching scrutiny. "What makes you think Joe might 'a' stopped at our house? Because you don't like my dad—is that the reason you think ever' bottle of licker you see comes from our house?"

"Don't git smart, boy. You would 'a' knowed it if Joe had stopped thar, wouldn't you?"

"I reckon I would, Tom Coker."

While Tom continued to gaze at the boy, suspiciously, another man came along the trail and stopped in the little crowd. He was George Taylor, a tall, lank person. His black eyes were small and keen, and he had a hooked nose. He wore blue overalls, a black coat, and a gray, wide-brimmed hat. Men in the log-woods called him a "bad actor," and he looked it. His hard features were set grimly as he stood whispering to some one and peering at the body of Joe Lynch.

At the moment when George Taylor arrived more than one person saw Carl White make a movement as if to draw a weapon. Then Carl had hesitated, had seemed to take himself in hand by an effort. He stepped quickly forward, bent over and whispered

something to Tom Coker. The deputy nodded understandingly, though not with any apparent eagerness, and went on with his search for the money which Lynch was supposed to have carried.

After feeling in each of the dead man's pockets without finding so much as a dollar, he got up and shook his head thoughtfully. Slowly he brushed the dirt of the trail from his knees.

"Robbery," he commented, in an undertone to Carl White. "Jist a plain killin' fer five hundred dollars, it seems."

"I was most sure it was hate," Carl returned in a low voice. "Maybe it was hate and robbery both, Tom." Then, with his lips almost touching the deputy's ear, he added in a whisper: "I know you and George Taylor are friends, Tom, but don't let that stand in the way of your duty as a' officer. We've got to remember the trouble betwixt George Taylor and Joe—and that George Taylor lives not more'n half a mile from here. Joe had to pass Taylor's house as well as Big Alf Miller's. Le's git the right man if we can. Le's not think of anything but that."

Standing a few feet away, Taylor frowned suddenly, as if aware that his name had been mentioned.

There was perfect silence in the little crowd.

Deputy Sheriff Tom Coker nodded again. He turned and looked at George Taylor.

"Come here, George," he said.

Taylor came forward at once. He did not so much as glance at Carl. His keen black eyes, gleaming a little, watched the officer's heavy face.

"Well, George, you see what has happened," the deputy began. "Joe Lynch has been killed—and robbed. It seems that it happened some time last night; we don't know, yet, jist what time. I ain't accusin' you of the killin', George; nobody ain't. Lots of folks, though, know that you and Joe ain't been on good terms, and me and Carl here thought you might want to say somethin' fer yourself."

Taylor understood. He had been asked, in so many words, if he could prove an alibi.

"I guess you've got the right to say what you've said to me, Tom," he returned slowly, "and of course I'm plum' anxious fer ever'body to be sure that I didn't have anything to do with this killin'. Me and Joe didn't like each other—you might say we hated each other—but I sure wouldn't stab a man in the back—'tain't in me to do a thing like that. But if I was that kind of a feller, I couldn't 'a' done this killin' last night. My wife is bad sick, and last night me and my girl set by her bed all night. I can prove by my wife and my girl that I didn't leave the house from dusk till after daylight this mornin'. Git a justice of the peace and bring him to my house, if you want to, and me and my women folks will make oath as to what I've said. And so thar you are, gentlemen," and George glanced around at the watching faces. "I'm plum' innocent, and of course I'm anxious fer ever'body to know it. I got word of the killin' a little while ago," he added. "I thought I might be expected to do some explainin'—on account of the way me and Joe Lynch felt towards each other. That's why I come here."

The deputy was thoughtful a moment. He looked at Carl White. His eyes invited Carl to speak.

"Reckon you'd better go to the house with him," Carl suggested. "I'll go with you as far as the gate."

"Why can't you go in?" Taylor asked quickly. "Since you're kin to the Lynchs, you ought to hear what my wife and girl'll have to say."

Carl shook his head.

"I ain't forgittin' that you tried to knife me, George, the day Joe kept you away from me with his gun," he answered. "If that was enough to make you hate him——"

"I was drinkin' that day, Carl, and you know it. I'm sorry I didn't make it up with you and Joe both. But you and me can bury the hatchet now. You're welcome in my house."

"All right; I'll go in with Tom," said Carl hesitatingly. "But a man's wife and girl, George, could be expected to do all in their power to keep him from bein' accused of murder," he added. "When I tole Tom

he'd better go to the house with you, I didn't mean we had to believe ever'thing your women folks tole him."

George Taylor was not offended.

"Anyhow, you can weigh what they tell you," he said briefly.

"Yes, of course." Carl White turned to the onlookers. "Who'll take Joe's body home, fellers?" he inquired.

Most of the men and boys stepped forward in a body, each anxious to help.

The deputy sheriff was fingering the bottle of whisky in his pocket. He looked the little crowd over.

"Where the dickens did Prince Miller go?" he asked suddenly.

No one knew. Prince had managed to depart without attracting attention.

"He said he was on his way to Pioneer, you know, when he found the body," said Carl White. "I sort of guess, though, that now he's headin' back home."

"Yes," growled the officer, "and I sort of guess the same thing."

CHAPTER THREE

YOUNG MILLER returned to the two-room shack on the side of Log Mountain. He found his huge, boyish-looking father standing in the doorway, and a glance told Prince that he was uneasy.

"Well, dad, I ain't gone to Pioneer yet," said the boy.

"So I see. What's the matter?"

"I come back to tell you that I think you're in a lot of danger."

"Eh? A lot of danger?" Big Alf's rugged face twitched slightly. "What kind of danger, Prince?"

The boy told of finding the dead man, and of all that followed. His father listened closely, nervously, and several times he ran the fingers of a big hand through his yellow hair.

"Either you or George Taylor are gonna be accused, dad, and I'm scared it's gonna be you," Prince declared. "I want to know if Joe Lynch stopped here last night. Did he?"

"Yes, he stopped here," the man answered hesitatingly.

"And you sold him some licker?"

"Yes—a pint."

"Then I guessed right about that bottle they found under Joe. Lord A'mighty, dad, what'd you sell him that one fer?"

"It was the only one in the house. The rest of the licker was hid out in the woods."

"But I'm afraid you've ruined yourself, dad," cried the boy, and he worked his feet as if he were standing on hot metal.

"What you goin' on like that fer, Prince?" Big Alf was growing excited, too. "How you figure I've ruined myself?"

"Why, that was the bottle you tole me to fill fer you—fer your own use. The cork was too little, and I had to wrap a paper aroun' it. The paper was a piece of a letter that Uncle Jim writ you from Clinton, and it's got your name on it! And when that deputy examines that piece of paper——Oh, Lord A'mighty!"

"Lord A'mighty!" the man echoed. "It's got my *name* on it?"

"It's got your name on it. I *read* your name on it. I didn't have any idee you was gonna sell it—leastwise not to a man that was gonna git killed jist a mile and a half away. What time was Joe here, dad?"

"Clost to midnight. But, say, Prince, they ain't no use to lose our heads. That piece of paper lacks a long ways of provin' I killed Joe Lynch. I jist sold him a bottle of whisky. I'll admit that if I have to—see?"

"I ain't aimin' to lose my head, dad, but I'm plum' scared. You've got a bad name as a bootlegger, and you and Joe had a quarrel once, and Tom Coker hates you like pizen. All these things'll go against you. I wish to the Lord I'd woke up while Joe was here. I wouldn't 'a' let nobody take a bottle away from this place with your name on a paper aroun' the cork. You wouldn't, either, if you'd knowed it."

Prince stopped moving his feet and looked at his father a long moment. The man kept running his big fingers through his yellow hair. Then the youngster added:

"Listen here to me, dad. They's somethin' wrong aroun' here. I didn't notice

anything strange about you when I left this mornin', but I noticed you was worried when you seen me comin' back. Did you know Joe Lynch was dead, and did you want me to find him and spread the news? It sort of seems like it, dad. You're actin' mighty queer about somethin'. Surely you didn't foller and kill him fer that five hundred dollars he had on him, did you?"

"Kill him nothin'!" the man cried. "How can you think that way about your dad, Prince? You come in here. I've got somethin' to tell you. I reckon I ought to 'a' tole you the facts this mornin', but you see, Prince——" Big Alf paused and scratched his head nervously.

"I can't see nothin', dad, till you tell me," said Prince as they entered the house and sat down. "Any licker in here?"

"No; all out in the woods where it was last night."

"That's good. I think Tom Coker and Carl White'll be up this way after a spell, but Tom can't arrest you fer havin' a little licker on hand. Now go ahead, dad. I'm a lot interested—and a lot uneasy. Tom Coker is sure to examine the piece of paper aroun' the cork in that bottle sooner er later."

Big Alf Miller looked at his son thoughtfully. They were nearly always together, and the man had fallen into the habit of treating the boy as an equal almost in every way. Experience had taught him that Prince was wise beyond his years. And then the love between these two crude beings made them confide in each other. So Alf Miller was glad to tell the lad about the thing that was making him afraid.

"Well, boy," he began, "when Joe Lynch come along last night and called me out, I saw he was drunk. But he was out of licker and wanted some more. I tole him he'd already had aplenty, and that he'd do well to git home the way he was, but he insisted, like a drunken feller will. I finally got him the bottle you'd filled fer me. Joe took a drink and begged me to have one, and then his tongue got more loose than ever and he showed me a big lot of bills. That made me uneasy about him, so I tried to git him to stay till mornin', but he wouldn't do it. Said he could take care of himself all right, and, besides, that he had promised his dad he'd be back last night. Then he shook hands and tole me what a good feller I was, like a drunk will. After that he went staggerin' away. The moon was bright, and I stood and watched him reel along down the trail till he disappeared.

"When he was gone I come back in the house and noticed that you hadn't woke up. I sat down and lit my pipe and begun to think about Joe—so drunk he was nearly helpless—and havin' all that money on him. I sort of liked Joe, even if we did have a bad quarrel once about his dog that he thought I killed. The more I thought about him the more uneasy I got. I sat thar fer a good spell, and I recollect that I called myself a darn fool fer not makin' Joe stay here. I thought maybe he might git off the road and fall over a cliff, er that maybe he might git robbed of that money. Then I happened to think that it might be a good idee to foller him and see how he was makin' it. So that's what I done.

"I reckon it was about twenty minutes after I left the house, Prince, that I found him—where you found him. And he was dead. I run on to the body all of a sudden, and the sight sure did give me a good scare. I looked down at him fer a minute, wonderin' what would be the best thing to do; then I decided that I'd better be gittin' away from thar. I knowed it wouldn't do fer me to report findin' the body. Folks would have wanted to know what I was doin' thar that time of night, and if I had tole 'em I had follered Joe to take care of him, they wouldn't 'a' believed me. No, sir; nobody would 'a' believed that Big Alf Miller had follered a man with five hundred dollars on him to take care of him. I should say not! Like you say, Prince, I ain't got the reputation of no saint. I been breakin' the law ever' day. Once Joe and me had trouble; and now thar lay Joe on the ground, and most likely he'd been robbed of his money. Well, as I said, Prince, I knowed it'd be best fer me to git away from thar and back to the house. That's what I didn't lose no time doin'.

"When I got back you was still asleep. I

sat aroun' till dawn, smokin' and studyin' and feelin' plum' scared. I hadn't done nothin' wrong, except sell Joe the licker, but I reasoned that the law would want to know if he had stopped here, and I knowed I might be suspected of the killin'. That's why I woke you and tole you to go to Pioneer after some things. I thought that if you was the first to find the body folks would feel that I wouldn't 'a' sent my own boy right by the place where I had killed a man. And I wouldn't, either. And so that's all, Prince," Big Alf added. "I didn't mean to tell you all this."

Prince Miller sat gazing at his father narrowly, searchingly. He drew a long breath.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "Dad, have you tole me the Lord's truth?"

"The Lord's truth, Prince. I didn't kill Joe, and I don't know who did. I jist stood thar fer a little spell and looked at the big dark place on his back and the one on his neck, and then I went away. I knowed them dark places fer what they was, and I knowed Joe was dead—knowed it without touchin' him."

"He couldn't 'a' been dead long."

"No, not long. The man that killed him might 'a' heard me comin'." Big Alf looked down and pondered. "Nobody must ever know I follered him, Prince. Nobody must ever l'arn that I left this house last night."

"By Heaven, no! But why didn't you git that bottle back, dad?"

"Huh! I was too much excited to think of a bottle, But even if it had crossed my mind I wouldn't 'a' got it. I didn't know the bottle carried *proof* of where it come from, you see. I didn't have any idee the piece of paper aroun' that cork had my name on it. Lord, but I wish I had 'a' knowed that!"

They talked an hour or more, discussing the murder, planning, wondering if a piece of paper with a name on it would prove sufficient to send Miller to prison. Big Alf tried not to think so. But fear was in his heart. He had said in so many words that the piece of paper would lack a long way of proving him guilty before a jury, but he did not know what else might come up against him. He did know that circumstantial evidence is a mighty dangerous thing.

"As quick as this is over, boy—and maybe they won't be much to it, after all—you and me are gonna live different," he said nervously. "We're goin' somewheres else and I'm gonna git a job and send my boy to school. We're gonna *live*. I'm through with breakin' the law."

"That's the idee!" Prince exclaimed heartily. "That dead man and the trouble that piece of paper might cause—it seems like they've changed you a lot, dad."

"Opened my eyes, boy. Nothin' in leadin' a life that's crammed full of pizen danger."

Finally a faint sound of voices came from the woods. Big Alf and his son looked at each other quickly, then the boy got up and went to the door. After peering keenly down the trail, he turned and nodded slowly.

"They're comin', dad," he announced, trying to speak calmly. "Tom Coker and Carl White."

Alf Miller straightened his shoulders. A stern look settled about his month.

"Well, we expected 'em, boy. Le's not lose our heads."

CHAPTER FOUR

AS the voices drew near Alf Miller and his son walked to the doorway and stood waiting. Coker and White came up and halted. The officer's hand rested on the butt of a revolver hanging in a holster at his side. He looked searchingly at Big Alf, then at the boy. Carl White paid no attention to Prince, but while the fingers of his thumbless left hand caressed his smooth, square chin, his dark eyes studied the giant-like moonshiner.

"And so, boy, you changed your mind about goin' to Pioneer," said the deputy. "Hurried back home to warn your dad, hey?"

"You said it," Prince returned calmly. "I been tellin' him that you might be fool enough to try to accuse him of the killin',

But when you git to thinkin' it was dad, Tom Coker, you've sure got another guess a-comin'. Dad didn't leave this place last night. I know that good and well."

"Yes? Well, it's a lot of good your word will do. I feel a lot like your dad was away from here last night—fer a little while—about as far from here, I'd say, as the place where you found the dead body of Joe Lynch."

"That's sayin' a right smart, feller," Big Alf put in. "I don't believe I'd bite off more'n I could chew if I was you."

"I'll try not, Alf. I happen to know that Joe Lynch stopped here last night, but Prince has already tole me he didn't. That looks mighty bad fer you, if I know anything."

"I *didn't* say he wasn't here," Prince declared quickly and warmly. "I said he wasn't here as I'd known of. Dad will tell you whether Joe stopped here er not."

"But you said you would 'a' knowed it if Joe stopped here. You can't deny that."

"Can't I? You're crazy, Tom Coker. I said I *reckoned* I would 'a' knowed it. He could 'a' come and went while I was asleep."

"Ah-ha! You made jist the break I wanted you to do," said the deputy. "If Joe could 'a' come and left while you was asleep, maybe"—the deputy glanced at Big Alf—"maybe your dad could 'a' been gone from the house fer an hour without you knowin' it."

The boy frowned, then stared foolishly. He opened his lips to speak, hesitated, then looked at his father.

Alf Miller turned his head and his eyes met those of his son.

"That's all right, Prince," he said. "The officer thinks he's put somethin' over on us, but it won't git him nothin'. Joe could 'a' been here when you was asleep, but that lacks a mighty lot of provin' that I was away from the house while you was asleep."

With his right hand still on his revolver and the other thrust into his coat pocket, fingering the bottle of whisky which he had found under the dead man, the deputy eyed Alf Miller keenly.

"Alf, do you deny that Joe was here last night?"

"I ain't denied it yet, Tom. But you say you already know he was here. How about tellin' me jist why you're so sure of it?"

"All right, I will. To be right plain with you, it seemed to Carl here that the killin' might lay between you and George Taylor. Carl seemed more willin' to suspect George than you, but we've been to George's house and talked to his women folks, and we've decided that, as things stand now, we ain't even got a' excuse to arrest him. But with you, Alf, it's a lot different. I found this bottle of licker"—Tom drew the bottle from his pocket—"layin' under Joe's body. You can see that under the circumstances this cork would attract any officer's attention. Well, after we'd talked with the Taylors I examined the piece of paper that's wrapped aroun' the cork and found your name on it. You're a bootlegger and it seems they ain't no reason to doubt that this licker come from your house. All right, then. Joe Lynch must 'a' stopped here."

"He did," said Big Alf, "and he got that bottle of licker here, of course, but I ain't gonna tell you, Tom, that I *sold* it to him, fer I ain't out to make a bootleggin' case against myself. I sure want to say, though, that I never follored him a step when he left here."

"No? Well, it seems to me, Alf, that you ought to be under arrest. Your boy has acted strange, I think, and talked strange. You have, too, I believe. Things look purty bad fer you, Alf."

"I reckon so, Tom—to you. But things ain't near as bad as they look."

"Well, anyhow, I feel like I've got to arrest you."

"Yes, I can see how you feel," said Alf, a faint note of mockery in his voice. "We're leavin' here right soon, I reckon?"

"As soon as we go and git my mules," said Coker, "fer I want to git back from the county seat before dark. Of course I intend to keep my eyes open," he added thoughtfully, "and if it seems like somebody else is more guilty than you—well, he'll be arrested, of course."

The deputy got out a pair of handcuffs. Without a word Big Alf Miller allowed his wrists to be locked together.

Prince trembled. Tears were in his eyes. He clinched his fists tightly. He wanted to shout his rage, to curse, to call the deputy sheriff all the vile things he had ever heard from the lips of men. Tom Coker was taking away the man he loved; the only person in the world on whom he was privileged to bestow love; the only man on earth who loved him. But Prince knew it would be foolish to start trouble. It would only make the situation worse for his father.

"It seemed like you was sort of waitin' fer me, Alf," said Coker, "and so I guess they ain't a lot of licker in the house. You wouldn't 'a' left it aroun'."

"Not a drop on the place. You ain't got no chance to git me fer handlin' licker when I'm cleared of this false charge of murder. But go ahead and waste your time searchin' if you feel like it."

"I guess I won't."

Carl White, who had not spoken since coming to the house with the deputy, was again caressing his chin with his long fingers while his eyes studied Big Alf's face.

"This is sure too bad, Alf, if you ain't guilty," he said. "You must remember that I ain't got nothin' against you—if you had nothin' to do with Joe's death. All I want is to git the man that killed him. I hope you ain't guilty."

"I ain't guilty, thanks," Alf answered, and then turned to his son. "You know where our money is, Prince," he said. "You stay here and take care of things till I git back. I ain't gonna have no examinin' trial before none of these deacon 'squires, fer they'd be scared not to hold me over fer court. It ain't but a month till Circuit Court, and so I'll jist set aroun' and look through the iron bars till that time and then git a trial in front of a jury. And they'll let me go, boy. If they ain't no more hatched up against me than is already hatched, a jury will sure say I'm not guilty. You needn't be a blamed bit scared about me."

"All right, dad." Prince's voice shook, but he squared his shoulders and met his father's eyes. "I'll be waitin'."

CHAPTER FIVE

WITH the departure of Alf Miller silence and loneliness settled about the little shack on the side of Log Mountain, and a great deal of the loneliness went into Prince Miller's heart. For a long while he sat in the doorway with his elbows on his knees and his freckled face resting in his hands. Misery and sorrow and intense suffering were in his blue eyes, and occasionally a tear fell on the ground between his ragged shoes.

He realized that the situation surrounding his father was just as the deputy sheriff had described it—things looked pretty bad for Big Alf.

"Of course he didn't do a thing like that," Prince said to himself. "I'm a dog to ask myself if it might 'a' been him, when I *know* it wasn't."

Prince stared at the woods in front of him—but without seeing the woods. He frowned darkly. He kept turning things over in his mind. Already he was missing Big Alf sorely. Boy that he was, he felt that he could not bear to be without his companionable father even for a week, not to speak of a month or more. And what if he should have to be without him for years? What if Big Alf should be sent to the penitentiary, or to the electric chair?

The dreadful speculation sent Prince's thoughts into a new channel. Was Tom Coker so thoroughly convinced he had arrested the real murderer that he would not investigate further? Prince thought so. The deputy sheriff might "keep his eyes open" for another suspect, as he had promised, but Prince believed he would busy himself in building up as strong a case as possible against Alf, and then wait to see what happened when the trial came off. Coker seemed too sure of Big Alf's guilt.

Prince trembled. He got up suddenly and began walking to and fro before the shack. He scratched his head and glared hard at the ground.

It was near the middle of the day when he entered the house and pulled a wooden box from under the dilapidated bed. From the box he took a red shirt which had been

patched several times and a pair of trousers which were a little better than those he had on. Prince Miller was about to "dress up!" He had decided to spend the afternoon away from the shack.

When he had made the change his neatness still would not have dazzled the eye. But he looked at least two years older than before—more like a man.

With his freckled forehead wrinkled in deep thought, he barred the back door with a strong board, locked the front door, and started off down the rocky trail. He met no one between his home and the spot where Joe Lynch was killed. There Prince halted, and, after looking along the trail in either direction, began a close search. A great longing shone from his eyes and a prayer was in his heart.

"Somebody killed Joe fer the five hundred dollars," he muttered. "Or maybe it was done through hate and to rob Joe like Carl said. And if the killer wasn't my dad—and it *wasn't*—that killer is somewheres around in the Log Mountain country."

He remained at and near the scene of the tragedy for a half-hour, during which time no one came along to disturb him. A few feet from the trail, and close to the cliff which formed the end of a ridge, there was a large pine tree, and Prince believed that here was where the murderer stood while waiting for Lynch. He probably had allowed Lynch to pass, then had stolen out and up behind him.

On the other side of the trail, down in the little ravine, Prince found a place among the bushes where apparently some one had plunged through in great haste. Some of the branches were broken, and on one slender bush the boy's searching eyes discovered a few dark specks, which he recognized as blood. Prince quivered at his ghastly find, then remembered that the blood proved nothing that he might consider of vast importance—not even that it was not his father who committed the crime. Prince reasoned that the blood had come from the slayer's knife. He further reasoned that the slayer was greatly excited, to judge from the way he had gone through the bushes; but clearly his excitement had not caused him to put the knife in his pocket, thus getting telltale blood on his clothes.

"The devil came this way," Prince whispered speculatively. "He took to the timber instead of stayin' on the trail. That's certain."

When he asked himself why, the answer was clear. For one thing, the killer had been afraid of meeting some one; for another, he must have wanted to hide the money somewhere in the deep woods. If he lived in the Log Mountain country he would not have dared to keep the money on him.

The boy had heard and read of the kind of dogs that trail criminals.

"Wish to the Lord I had some bloodhoun's!" he said fervently. "Wish to the Lord I did!" But there were no bloodhounds in that section of East Tennessee. And even if there had been they would not have been rushed over to the Log Mountain country. A man had already been accused of the murder of Joe Lynch and placed under arrest.

After a few moments Prince Miller found something else. And this time it was a discovery which caused his face to grow pale and his blue eyes to bulge.

His heart beat wildly as he left the ravine and again started along the trail. "Lord A'mighty!" he muttered through gray lips. "Can this be so? Yes, I reckon it sure is so. Lord A'mighty!"

Prince struggled to master his excitement. He succeeded to the extent that when he left the trail and approached the home of old Henry Lynch his freckled face and blue eyes were so free of emotion that their expression was almost blank. But a great deal was going on inside of Prince Miller's head. His mind had never been so busy.

A crowd had gathered to see the dead man, to discuss the tragedy, and to sympathize with Henry Lynch. Fifty or sixty persons were in the house, on the big porch, and in the yard when Prince arrived. Some of them stared at him, for everybody had heard that his father had been arrested for the murder, but Prince was unaffected by their questioning looks. He knew that his presence there did not seem proper, but he felt that he couldn't afford not to be

there. So let the folks gaze their eyes out; let them nudge each other and point at him. It did not matter at this moment. His thoughts were almost entirely occupied by the secret motive which had brought him to the Lynch house.

He spoke to several boys. One of them was a brother to a young woman with whom Joe Lynch had kept company, and this boy Prince took out by the fence for a little talk. He and Prince were friends, and together they knew a great deal of current gossip. Especially did they know about the love affairs of many young men, for they themselves had reached the age when they had begun to think about "steppin' around" with the girls.

Young Miller told his friend of finding the body and of a few things that followed; and then, without saying much about his father's arrest, he asked a number of shrewd questions. Prince's friend did not seem to suspect that the questions had a hidden purpose behind them. But then he was not the mental equal of the little man trapper.

Prince remained at Mr. Lynch's most of the afternoon, walking about in the yard, watching, listening. He did not enter the house.

CHAPTER SIX

WHEN Tom Coker returned from the county seat at dusk he found Prince Miller standing by his barn. Prince did not speak until the officer dismounted, then he stepped forward and faced him.

"Tom, you and me has got to do some talkin'," he said seriously.

"Talkin'? All right, boy." There was a faint bit of sympathy in Coker's voice. "I guess you feel purty lonesome, don't you?"

"Yes, that's right—I do. I've got somethin' terrible important to say, Tom. But go ahead and feed your mules."

Coker took the animals into the barn. He was gone only a few minutes. When he came out he looked at Prince keenly.

"What's on your mind?" he asked.

"They's a whole lot, Tom. You ain't got no use fer my dad, have you?"

Tom Coker grinned.

"No, I don't care much fer him," he said. "Fact is, I don't like him a bit."

"That's because you ain't been able to jail him fer sellin' licker."

The officer's grin faded. He looked hard at the boy's freckled face.

"Well, maybe," he admitted frankly.

"But you're square, Tom; you've got the name of bein' square. So, if you didn't think my dad was guilty of murder you wouldn't want to see him in jail fer murder. That right?"

"Your dad's guilty, Prince. I ain't had much doubt about it since the minute I examined the cork in that bottle. It was fate that caused him to make the mistake of lettin' Joe have that perticular bottle. Fate don't let a murderer git clear often."

"But the paper that was aroun' the cork don't prove my dad killed him. You know it don't."

"That paper happened to be the only thing that would make Alf admit that Joe stopped thar. And the way Alf acted, and the way you acted——"

"Wait a minute, Tom. No use to go into that. You jist listen here. I'm gonna open your eyes about somethin'."

And now Prince Miller began a story. It was intensely interesting. The deputy sheriff's eyes grew wide as he listened, and he did not try to conceal the fact that he was excited. He watched Prince closely till he finished, then he reached out and laid a hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Prince," he began, his voice shaking a little, "surely it ain't possible that you've told me the truth!"

"It's the Lord's truth. You'll find that it is."

Tom Coker's eyes began to gleam. A grim look drove away the astonishment that had been on his heavy face.

"Well, if it is the truth—— Come on, Prince, le's go. You've made me a lot anxious, boy."

"Better git your flashlight. It's comin' night, and maybe the moon won't be enough."

Coker had a flashlight in the barn. He got it, and they hurried to the place where Joe Lynch was killed. After remaining there a few minutes, they came back along the trail and turned down toward old Mr. Lynch's home. A dangerous light was in Tom Coker's eyes. Prince was quivering just a little.

The man waited at the gate while his companion went into the house. Presently young Miller came out with Carl White, who was dressed in his best, and together they approached the deputy. There was a puzzled look on Carl's face. His dark eyes were questioning.

"Well, what's up?" he inquired. "Learned somethin' new about the killin', Tom?"

"I think maybe we will," the deputy answered quietly. "I sort of think Big Alf might not be guilty after all. Come on; we want you to go with us, Carl."

Carl White hesitated. The moon had risen and in its light Carl peered at the deputy's heavy features.

"Where you goin', Tom?"

"To where Joe was killed. Prince keeps swearin' his dad ain't guilty, and says he can prove it, and he's got me a lot uncertain. We thought you'd be glad to go with us."

"Of course," said White. "I sure don't want a' innocent man to suffer. If it turns out, though, that Alf ain't the killer, we sure want to git the guilty party. I don't intend to rest till that man pays. You know how much me and Joe thought of each other."

"Yes, I know," said the deputy. "Me and Prince was talkin' about that."

Fifteen minutes later they reached the spot on the trail where Joe Lynch had died. There the officer stepped suddenly behind Carl White and pressed the muzzle of a revolver against the back of his body.

"Don't move, you pizen snake!" he said snarlingly. "Put your hands out in front of you! Quick!"

A dreadful fear drove the strength from Carl White's body. Weakly he held out his hands.

The deputy took a pistol from the captive's hip pocket. Then he came around in front of White and looked at him.

"What's this you're pullin' off?" White inquired, trying to keep his voice from shaking. "What am I bein' treated like this fer?"

"Gonna make a bluff that you don't know, hey?" said Coker. "Well, I can tell you purty quick. You and Joe was mighty good friends till you both started tryin' to court the same girl, and then, when you went sort of crazy about her you got so you didn't like Joe so much—fer the girl got to likin' him a little better'n she liked you. I'm doin' a bit of guessin' now, but I know I'm guessin' right. You got jealous of Joe, I'd guess. You and Joe didn't quarrel; you went on pertendin' to be jist as good a friend to him as ever; but you said a good lot to the girl about him, lettin' her know that you wanted her to give him the cold shoulder, and her brother heard some of it. Prince asked him some questions. He didn's suspect nothin'—but me and Prince has put two and two together. We figure that when Joe went to Jacksboro after the five hundred dollars you knowed he was comin' back that night—most likely late in the night—and you decided to kill two birds with one stone. You murdered him to keep him from takin' the girl and to get his money.

"You're a copperhead, Carl White. You wanted to credit your crime to George Taylor fer two reasons—you hated him and you wanted to keep suspicion from yourself. Failin' in that, you was willin' fer Big Alf Miller to be accused. It was my fault, too, that Alf was arrested, and partly the fault of what they call fate. But you're none the less a pizen snake."

Carl's face had turned a sickly pallor. He stood there in the moonlight and trembled. But he tried to be game.

"You're full of lies, Tom Coker!" he cried hoarsely. "Me and Joe was courtin' the same girl, and I admit I did pertend that I didn't want her to go with him, but they wasn't no hate between us on account of her. I was at home, upstairs in my room, when Joe was killed. Uncle Henry knows I was thar. So does Anna Perkins."

"Huh! You could have left the house

without them knowin' it. They's a little oak tree within three feet of the winder to your room, and today Prince looked at that tree clost. Somebody has been climbin' up and down it—somebody with dirt on their shoes. It was you."

"It's a lie!" cried Carl. "You're accusin' me without reason, darn you!" But his voice shook worse than ever.

"Where's the money you took off of Joe?" the deputy inquired.

"I didn't kill him, Tom Coker! You're talkin' like a fool!"

"Am I? Well, le's go down here. They's somethin' I want to show you. It's somethin' that Prince found, and it told him plain that you was the killer."

The two men and the boy went down into the ravine. They passed through a clump of bushes and paused at the edge of a little ditch which had been made by heavy summer rains. A portion of the bottom of the ditch was covered with damp sandy mud.

"Now look," said the deputy, and he turned his flashlight downward. "Jist what have you got to say about that?"

Carl White stared—stared wildly. There in the bottom of the shallow ditch, in the mud, was something which meant his ruin. It was the plain print of a left hand—*a hand without a thumb!*

"You was in a big hurry when you come along here," said the deputy sheriff. "You fell when you struck this ditch, and without knowin' it you left a mighty plain mark of your crippled left hand. You couldn't 'a' done it any better if you had tried. I reckon you was a whole lot excited, Carl. It was jist a little fall, but it's sure gonna play a big part in your life. Where did you hide that stack of bills?"

"I—I reckon it's all up with me," Carl White confessed through ashen lips. "I done it fer the five hundred dollars—and to keep him from gittin' the girl. I'll take you to the money."

"Lord A'mighty!" cried Prince Miller, throwing his hat into the air. "Dad'll be back ag'in tomorrow!"

CONVICT SEIZES A CAR IN PRISON AND ESCAPES

LEON GOLDEN, a 40-year-old convict, serving a six-year term for robbery, escaped from Sing Sing Prison on September 9th in an automobile on which he had been working in the prison garage. When last seen he was headed south for New York City.

Golden is five feet ten inches in height, weighs 180 pounds, and has dark hair and dark complexion. The automobile in which he made his escape was a five-passenger Buick touring car belonging to James Connaughton and bore the New York license plate 849,086.

Golden also stole the license plates belonging to the automobile of Clem Freiling, a prison employee, which had the number 875,820, and it is believed that he substituted these for the original license plates of the car in which he made his getaway.

Golden's escape is the first in a year. He was employed as a mechanic in the prison garage, and used the car he was working on to make his escape. He drove away from the garage toward the new prison and past a gang of one hundred convicts and several guards. Only one of these guards suspected that there was anything out of the way, and by the time this guard had confirmed his suspicion Golden had a forty-minute start on the prison officials.

The big siren that is sounded when a prisoner makes a break from Sing Sing was silent because of the fact that Golden had such a head start.

Officials of the prison are following Golden's trail in other automobiles. He was last seen at Sparta, where he turned into the Albany Post Road and headed south toward New York.

The Empty Grave

By LESLIE CHILDS

I KNEW very little about the criminologist Sumner Sheridan prior to the time he employed me as his clerk.

It was in September that Mr. Sheridan was called on to unravel the mystery surrounding the gruesome robbery of the grave of one Colonel Simon P. Farrington. On the morning of the day in question I had arrived at the office a full hour earlier than usual, as I had some work which I wished to have completed for Mr. Sheridan's inspection upon his arrival, when much to my surprise I found him already in his office.

"Come right in, Sloan," he greeted me, "and never mind those English cases you were running down for me; they can wait. I have an appointment here within a few minutes, which accounts for my being down so early. Mr. Chalmers Davidson, general manager of the National Celtic Insurance Company in this city, telephoned to my residence about thirty minutes ago and asked me to meet him here. Davidson is a keen phlegmatic business man, not inclined to become excited over trifles, and from what he told me over the telephone I imagine he has an interesting story to tell."

At that moment we heard footsteps in the hallway, the office door was pushed open, and a well-groomed, smooth-faced, black-eyed gentleman entered.

"Trust I haven't kept you waiting; I came on the run after making the appointment with you."

Mr. Davidson glanced at me inquiringly, and was answered by Mr. Sheridan, who said:

"This is Mr. Sloan, my assistant; you may speak freely in his presence."

"Very good," returned the other, with a nod at me, "so I will begin at the beginning of this matter. As you know, I am the general manager of the National Celtic Insurance Company for this territory."

Mr. Sheridan bowed in the affirmative.

"About three months ago my company wrote a policy of insurance on the life of Colonel Simon P. Farrington in the sum of $100,000, and about ten days ago the Colonel died at his residence, 2345 Park Avenue. Proof of death was promptly made by the widow, who is the beneficiary under the policy, which was forwarded through my office here to our New York office, as is customary with my company.

"This proof was not entirely acceptable, in respect to the cause of death, and our medical board recommended that there be an autopsy performed. This, as you may know, my company had the right to demand under clause 35 of the policy. Mrs. Farrington, the widow, was notified of this. She readily assented, and I made arrangements to have the body disinterred this morning at an early hour. For this purpose I accompanied Doctor Krisler, our local medical officer, and Doctor Brown, of the State Board of Health, to Woodlawn Cemetery, where the Colonel had been buried.

"We were met at the gates by Mr. Whitcomb, the head caretaker, who informed us that the grave of Colonel Farrington had been opened during the night, and the body removed. We proceeded on to the Farrington lot, and found, just as Mr. Whitcomb had reported, the grave had been robbed. Mr. Whitcomb informed us that he had all but captured the robbers in the act, as they were refilling the grave after the removal of the body; but they succeeded in eluding him and made their escape.

"I immediately went to Mr. Whitcomb's house, which is situated just inside the main entrance to the cemetery, and telephoned you, for I felt that the matter was of unusual interest and importance. I am here to engage your services in going to the bottom of this affair. Money is no object in this case, Mr. Sheridan."

"Now, that's all right, interposed Sheridan; "the case interests me, so let us go into the matter a little further."

"Good," responded Mr. Davidson.

"Who wrote this insurance policy on the life of Colonel Farrington?"

"I wrote it myself."

"Just who is this Colonel Farrington? I don't seem to place him."

"Well, really, I don't know much about the man. He is a retired British army officer, served many years in India and came to this city about six months ago. He leased the old Holliday residence on Park Avenue, and he and Mrs. Farrington have gone about in society quite a little."

"Where did you meet them, and how did you come to write this large policy?"

"I met them at the Indian Valley Golf Club. I don't remember all the circumstances of writing the policy, but insurance was mentioned, and the Colonel remarked that he was interested, so I wrote him up."

"I see," mused Mr. Sheridan. "How much of a family did the Colonel have?"

"Just he and his wife."

"How many servants did they employ?"

"Two, as far as I know. The Colonel had a Hindu man-servant, whom he had brought from India, and Mrs. Farrington employed a maid. They lived very simply."

"Can you describe Colonel Farrington?"

"He was a large man; must have weighed over two hundred pounds, though he carried his weight well. He was smooth-faced, with black hair tinged with gray, and with a square, determined jaw; taken all in all, he was a fine type of the military man."

"And Mrs. Farrington—is she an English woman?"

"I cannot say, but I think she is American. I'll tell you, their pictures were in the *Press* Sunday Supplement two weeks ago—a very fine likeness of both of them."

"Get me that Sunday supplement, Sloan," Mr. Sheridan said to me. I went to the file-room and brought the paper. Mr. Sheridan spread the paper upon the desk before him and examined the pictures of Colonel and Mrs. Farrington with care.

"I don't see your object in going into the history of Colonel Farrington so deeply," expostulated Mr. Davidson; "the Colonel is dead, all right, and what we want is to get the body and hold an autopsy."

"Quite right," agreed Mr. Sheridan, "and do you actually suspect foul play?"

"Well, our medical board is suspicious."

"What cause was assigned for his death?"

"Heart failure, but the attending doctor was not clear as to what led up to it. It seems he proposed an autopsy to Mrs. Farrington, but she would not consent."

"Who was the attending physician?"

"Doctor Zimmerman, of 2346 Park Avenue. The doctor is not engaged in practice at this time, but devotes his time to lecture work in the Central States Medical College. He was called in when the Colonel had this attack because his residence is just across the street from the Farrington home."

"Then Colonel Farrington died quite suddenly?"

"He has had several attacks of this kind, but they did not call a medical man until this final attack. The Colonel was dead when Doctor Zimmerman arrived."

Mr. Sheridan was silent for a few seconds, then asked:

"What would be the object of getting possession of the body of Colonel Farrington, and who would benefit by its concealment?"

"If this man met with foul play," exclaimed Mr. Davidson, "and the beneficiary is concerned in it, the policy would be void, and could not be enforced. In such a situation it would then be very much to the beneficiary's advantage to prevent an autopsy being held. Of course, Mr. Sheridan, I am not making any charge of foul play against any one, but $100,000 is a lot of money, and we propose to take advantage of our rights under the policy before making payment."

"If the body is not recovered your com-

pany would then be liable under the policy, regardless of how death was brought about?"

"That's the way I look at it. Of course, the Colonel is dead. We are not disputing that. And since we only seek to ascertain the real cause of his death, we must first recover the body before we can pursue our theory. As the matter now stands, there is no doubt of the liability of my company for the payment of this policy."

"That is undoubtedly true," agreed Mr. Sheridan.

"I tell you there is something wrong here," continued Mr. Davidson in some excitement. "Look at the circumstances."

"Yes, it does look suspicious," agreed Mr. Sheridan, "and, to say the least, the case presents some striking angles. There are several clues that must be followed before much may be said in a definite way. I think we can clear up this matter without any great delay. Suppose you leave the case entirely in my hands?"

"Very well."

Following Mr. Davidson's departure my employer again looked long and earnestly at the pictures of Colonel Farrington and his wife in the Sunday supplement. Then, as though coming to a sudden decision, he said:

"Sloan, get me that British Army Register in the library. It is on the seventh shelf back from the right."

I brought the volume, and Mr. Sheridan turned to the F's and ran his finger down them.

"There is no Simon P. Farrington listed. That's strange. Still, it might have been omitted by error. Say, by the way, there was an attempted burglary at the Farrington home last night. I noted it coming down this morning, but did not stop to read the account."

Mr. Sheridan reached for the paper and, turning to page four, devoured the account. I stood back of him and, looking over his shoulder, read as follows:

"A burglar was discovered early this morning in the home of the late Colonel Simon P. Farrington, 2345 Park Avenue, by Mrs. Farrington's maid Nora Spradley. The maid had been away since the death of Colonel Farrington, visiting relatives out of the city and returned about one o'clock this morning. She did not wish to disturb Mrs. Farrington, so quietly let herself in with a latch-key and went to her room on the second floor of the house. While in her room her door was pushed open and she was confronted by the prowler. This so frightened her that she ran screaming through the hallway and jumped from a front window, which was open, landing on the porch, from which she fell to the sidewalk in front of the house, suffering painful injuries. Officer Bill Copeland was passing and made an investigation, but was unable to find any trace of the burglar. Miss Spradley, the maid, was taken in a city ambulance to the home of her mother, Mrs. Lenora Spradley, 4521 Hazelwood Avenue."

"So much for that," said Mr. Sheridan, tossing the paper aside, "and now let us get in my car and go out and inspect that graveyard."

A thirty-minute drive through the choice residential section of the city brought us to Woodlawn Cemetery. It was on the outskirts of the city and comprised a tract of about fifty acres of slightly rolling ground. The tract was entirely inclosed by a boulder fence some four feet in height, which in turn was coped with an iron fence. The whole fence was seven feet high.

We stopped just inside the massive iron entrance-gates opposite the house of the head caretaker, Mr. Whitcomb. That gentleman almost immediately made his appearance, and upon Mr. Sheridan informing him that he represented the National Celtic Insurance Company, and had come to investigate the robbery of the Farrington grave, he began a voluble recital of the events of the night before. He took his seat in the car at Mr. Sheridan's invitation and directed him to drive to the southwest corner of the cemetery.

"When was Colonel Farrington buried?" Sheridan asked him.

"One week ago last Tuesday."

"Then he was in the ground eleven days today."

"Yes, sir; but this job must have been

planned for several days, and the guilty parties probably have been waiting for a good chance."

"What makes you think that?"

"It's this way: Every night, after my men go home, I close and lock the gates. But before going to bed I usually look around a bit; so a week ago last Tuesday night, just after this colonel had been buried, I thought I saw the flash of a light. I had my dog Sharp with me and he, too, noticed something wrong, for he set up a barking and ran in the direction of the light.

"It was not such a dark night, and I walked around that way, the dog barking and running a hundred yards ahead of me. I didn't see any one, but a car which had been outside the fence in the roadway started and left as we approached. The next morning I strolled down that way and saw tracks in the tall grass next the fence where some one had got over into the graveyard.

"I didn't think so much about it until the next night. I was looking around and about the same thing happened. I saw a light, my dog set up a barking, and as we approached that corner of the cemetery I saw a fellow climb over the fence. Sunday always brings a big crowd out here, and that night I missed Spark. I went out about eight o'clock and found him in a corner of the greenhouse, a mighty sick dog. My old woman poured some warm lard down his throat, but he died before morning. He was poisoned. Them skunks that robbed that grave wanted to get him out of the way."

"Which direction shall I turn here?" questioned Mr. Sheridan as we came to a cross trail.

"Right down that way," directed the superintendent. "See those men down there? There's that detective sent out by the police department standing to the right with my man Thomas, whom I left to guard the place.

"Last night about twelve-thirty I come over this ridge and, looking down in that valley, saw some one digging. Now, I thought, I will get them red-handed. I only seen one, so, with my cane in my hand, I charged him. He dropped his shovel and ran for the fence, me right after him. There was a car waiting for him on the outside, and he beat me to the fence, where he had cut the iron coping. Through this he went and into the car, which was off like a shot.

"I came back to the grave and could see that they had dug down into the head, but did not know for certain whether they had got the body or not. So this morning as soon as it was daylight I came down here and saw that they had got it. That fellow was trying to fill the grave in again, I guess. He left his rope, though, and the shovel."

"What kind of a looking man was he?" asked Sheridan.

"I can't describe him, for it was too dark to see good, but he was a little fellow and as active as a cat. He went over the wall and through the cut place in the iron coping like lightning."

By this time we drew up at the Farrington lot and got out of the machine. Inspector Casey came forward at sight of Mr. Sheridan and said:

"Not much to it, Mr. Sheridan. Guess the medical boys wanted a stiff. Wycoff wouldn't touch the case, so I came out to give the place the once-over."

"Find any clues?" questioned Mr. Sheridan.

"Only this shovel which they left behind," returned the officer. "Not much to be made of that," and he pointed to an ordinary garden shovel.

Sheridan began a minute examination of the grave. It had been opened at its head and just enough earth removed to permit the drawing out of the body after the head of the casket had been broken. Mr. Sheridan dropped on his knees and began to carefully examine the loose earth inside the grave and along its sides. Here he discovered several pieces of wax or tallow which seemed to me to have been dropped by a sputtering candle which the grave-robbers had probably used. After examining these pieces, Sheridan carefully placed them in his pocket. He then paced the distance between the grave and the fence at the point where the body had been passed through.

At this point the iron coping had been cut at a joint and one panel strained outward to make an opening. The roadway on the outside of the fence was as hard as rock and showed no marks of the tread of the automobile that had been used by the body-snatchers. Mr. Sheridan examined the stone wall at the point of the opening in the iron coping, then said:

"The robbers had a lady assistant."

"How do you make that out?" I asked, for I failed to see anything that would tend to prove it.

"Notice this moss-like growth on the inside of the wall," he explained; "well, see how it has been disturbed from the top down. That was probably caused by the lady rubbing against it with her skirt as she assisted in getting the body through the opening and over the wall. If it had been a man or men only we would not see this wide sweep of disturbed area, for he would have only brushed against it with the legs of his trousers at most."

When my attention was called to the matter, I observed that the inside of the wall at the opening had apparently been swept clean of moss, and looked as though it had been done by some one wiping it with a cloth of some kind.

"Besides, look what we have here," continued Sheridan as he arose from an examination of the base of the wall. He held in his hand a dainty shoe-tap, that had evidently been wrenched from the heel of a woman's shoe.

"The lady perhaps had some difficulty managing her skirts in getting over this wall, caught the heel of her shoe in the crevice and the tap came off."

Returning to the grave, Sheridan signified that he had completed his investigation, and getting into his car we started to drive away. Under-Inspector Casey hailed us.

"Simply a body-snatching job, ain't it, Mr. Sheridan?" he asked, but his manner suggested that he had his doubts.

"I am not certain, Casey," replied Sheridan. "I want to follow a number of clues, and if anything worth while develops I will communicate with you this evening."

"I wish you would," answered the other as we drove away.

On our way back to the city we passed the home of the late Colonel Farrington. The house was a square-built, two-story brick standing about fifteen feet from the sidewalk on a spacious tract of perhaps an eighth of an acre of ground. A large double brick garage was to be seen at the back of the lot, with a gravel driveway leading from Park Avenue past the house.

Mr. Sheridan stopped the car at the curb and, without telling me his intention, got out and, walking up to the front door, rang the bell. The ring was answered by a swarthy young man whom I judged to be the Hindu manservant mentioned by Mr. Davidson. Mr. Sheridan inquired of him as to the residence of Doctor Zimmerman.

"Just across the street," the Hindu replied, and pointed to the doctor's residence.

Mr. Sheridan thanked him and returned to the car with a slight smile playing around the corners of his mouth, and I knew that his real purpose in calling at the Farrington home was not to ask the way to Doctor Zimmerman's house.

"Come on, Sloan," Mr. Sheridan said, in a voice that the Hindu could hear as he stood in the doorway, "the doctor lives over here."

We were admitted into the reception-room of Doctor Zimmerman by a frowsy-headed house-maid, and a few minutes later the doctor made his appearance.

"Yes," he said, "I attended Colonel Farrington. A most interesting case. I am not engaged in the practice of my profession, as you know, but devote all my time to research work and in lecturing. However, when the Colonel was stricken his Hindu servant ran across the street and called me in, as I knew the Colonel and Mrs. Farrington slightly, as neighbors.

"The Colonel was, however, dead upon my arrival, rigor mortis being apparent. I could do nothing to bring back life, but the face and general appearance of the throat were so peculiar that I stayed to examine them. I also questioned the Hindu servant as to the past life of the Colonel, and learned that he had spent a number of years

in India. And while the immediate cause of death was no doubt heart failure, I am inclined to believe it was but the culmination of some tropical infection he had acquired in India. A most interesting case. I suggested an autopsy to Mrs. Farrington, but she would not entertain the proposal. I lectured on the case before my class of seniors the next day and the questions raised caused several of them to go rather deeply into certain diseases peculiar to India."

Leaving Doctor Zimmerman's residence, Mr. Sheridan turned the car down Southern Avenue.

"Did you note what the doctor said about lecturing before his senior class on the case of Colonel Farrington?" I asked.

"My, Sloan, you're a regular detective, and that is a worth-while point. As you no doubt are thinking, those students after listening to the doctor might have been tempted to rob that grave in order to use the body in the interest of science. We will give that some thought as we go along, but I don't think it is our main thread."

"Where do we go from here?" I asked.

"We will next interview Nora Spradley," my companion replied; "she was Mrs. Farrington's maid, you know, and is the young lady who jumped out the window last night when she encountered the prowler in the Farrington home. You see, Sloan, there are a number of threads to this case, and each must be followed to its end. A housemaid is always worth interviewing in a case of this kind, as they generally talk freely."

Arriving at 2452 Hazelwood Avenue, we were admitted to the modest home of Mrs. Spradley, the mother of Nora, the maid.

"Yes, the poor dear was almost scared to death," the old lady rambled—"an awful experience. I suppose you are newspaper men; we have had two other reporters here this morning."

We found the Spradley girl in bed, and, while her nerves were still jumpy, she was not averse to granting an interview.

"I sure was scared to death," she said. "Mrs. Farrington didn't know I was in the house, you know."

"You say Mrs. Farrington did not know you were in the house?" questioned Mr. Sheridan.

"No. You see, the day after the funeral Mrs. Farrington gave me a ten-days' vacation. She said she would be out of the city herself—was going to visit her sister down State. So I went to Snods Corner to visit my Aunt Mamie. I got back a little before my time was up and landed in the city at one o'clock in the morning. The cars had stopped running, so I thought I would walk out to Mrs. Farrington's, and if she had got back I would go in, and if she had not got back I planned to spend the night with Lena Jones, who works for the Simpkins on Park Avenue.

"When I reached the Farrington house I saw a light in Mrs. Farrington's room on the ground floor and knew she was home. So I just used my pass-key, slipped in the side door and went up to my room without knocking on her door. That foreigner, the Indian, was in the garage. I saw him putting the car away when I come around the house. Well, my room was upstairs at the back of the hall next the bathroom. All the rest of them slept downstairs. I went in my room, and didn't even turn on the light, as it was light enough, anyway, so sat on the bed undressing. I closed my door when I went in, and as I sat there taking my hair down I was horrified to see my door slowly opening. I sat still, and a moment later the door was pushed back and a big black-bearded man with a skullcap on looked right in on me.

"I first thought it was Colonel Farrington's ghost, but as the Colonel never wore any beard I knew that could not be. I was so scared that I jumped right at him, knocked him over, and with a scream ran down the hallway. I missed the stairs in my excitement, and as I came to the front window, which was open, I jumped through it onto the porch and fell off to the walk below. Maybe you think I didn't scream. Bill picked me up—yes, Bill Copeland; he's on that beat now and was walking by. I don't know whether I will go back to work there or not. Mrs. Farrington came running out when I screamed and landed on the sidewalk, and that Indian looked out

and then dodged back. Mrs. Farrington wanted them to take me to the hospital but I had the ambulance bring me right out here to ma."

"Yes, the poor dear has had an awful fright," interjected Mrs. Spradley.

"How many people did Colonel and Mrs. Farrington have working for them?"

"Just me and that Indian. I done the cooking and was maid-of-all-work, and the Hindu spent most of his time waiting on the Colonel. They brought him from China, or somewhere, and he could speak English as well as you or me, but I never liked him. He was always sneaking around."

After taking leave of Mrs. Spradley and her daughter, we drove back to the city and went directly to Mr. Sheridan's office. It was now about one o'clock, and I suggested that we have a lunch, but my employer declined.

"I work better when fasting," he replied; "but you run along and get a bit to eat, then come back up here."

I did as he suggested, and upon my return to the office a few minutes later I found him immersed in his files. He had, with the aid of Miss Duffy, his stenographer, gotten out hundreds of pictures and photographs, which were spread upon his desk. He was going over these one at a time, evidently looking for some particular photograph. His newspaper and picture files were so perfect that I believe he had a picture or account of every criminal of note who had gained notoriety within the preceding twenty years. It was his hobby to keep account of criminal characters and he followed their careers as carefully as any professional police-gallery man.

About five o'clock he suddenly stopped leafing a large record-book, which contained pictures of noted characters which had been clipped from the newspapers, and, lolling back in his chair, said:

"Everything is all clear. Miss Duffy, get me Inspector Casey, will you?"

The telephone rang, Mr. Sheridan's buzzer called him, and he began talking to Casey. I heard him say:

"Have your men on hand and stationed. You come up here at eight o'clock sharp, and bring two good men with you."

He rang off.

At five-thirty, after Miss Duffy had gone, we went down on the street and, entering a restaurant, ordered a light meal. Mr. Sheridan assumed a gay air that was a revelation to me. He seemed like a schoolboy on a lark, and yet, by the serious intervals with which his moods were spaced, I felt he was under a certain nervous tension. We returned to his office a little before eight o'clock, and soon thereafter Casey, accompanied by two detectives, entered.

"Have you got your men stationed where I mentioned?" questioned Mr. Sheridan.

"Yes, they're on the job, and I only hope this turns out all right," Casey returned somewhat uneasily, "for while I don't doubt your ability, Mr. Sheridan, you must admit that I am taking some risk in following your directions without knowing anything about your plan of action."

"Never mind, Casey, I've never got any upstanding officer like yourself into trouble. You can trust me. If I am not mistaken, you will make the biggest haul of your career this evening. Come on. Let's go."

Leaving the office, we all got in the car and drove north along Park Avenue. Sheridan parked the car at a corner one square south of the Farrington home, and we proceeded on foot. As we reached the front of the house I saw several figures skulking in the rear, and on each corner were men whom I knew to be plainsclothes men. We climbed the steps and Mr. Sheridan rang the bell.

The door was opened by the Hindu servant, who upon seeing a policeman attempted to close the door. Mr. Sheridan placed his foot in the jamb and, giving the signal to Casey, they pushed the door open and laid hands upon the Hindu.

"We are officers," said Casey, "so don't give us any trouble."

"We wish to interview Mrs. Farrington," added Sheridan; "where is she?"

The hallway in which we were standing was high-ceilinged but well lighted, and I

noted a number of doors leading from it. At that instant a door to our left opened and Mrs. Farrington looked at us. I easily recognized her from the pictures I had seen in the paper that morning. She drew herself up and, staring at us in fine hauteur, demanded:

"What does this mean?"

With that Mr. Sheridan, nodding to one of the officers to secure the door, motioned us to advance into the room, and said:

"Just a little call, Mrs. Farrington, or, rather, Ruby Coleman, or perhaps you would rather respond to the title of Broadway Nell."

The woman's manner changed in the twinkling of an eye. I saw her nostrils dilate as she stepped backward, glaring at Mr. Sheridan like a trapped animal.

"Sure, you're Broadway Nell, one of the slickest confidence operators in this country. I've had your picture in my collection over a year," exclaimed Inspector Casey.

"And this gentleman is Sakuni Singh, a Hindu crook of no mean ability," said Mr. Sheridan, looking at the dark little man to his left; "Scotland Yard will give a pretty penny for news of his capture. Now we want Colonel Farrington, to make our precious trio complete. Where is he?" addressing the Hindu.

"Me no spika English."

"Oh, you don't," replied Mr. Sheridan, "well, you had a fair command of the language when you were graduated from Oxford ten years ago. Come on, out with it. You robbed Colonel Farrington's grave last night—rescued the Colonel, as it were. He wasn't dead. You taught him to swallow his tongue. Here is the wax you used to plug his ears and nostrils."

Mr. Sheridan drew several of the wax pellets from his pocket that I had seen him pick up during the examination of the Farrington grave that morning. The Hindu's eyes narrowed and he glanced sideways at the officer next to him.

"It is no use attempting an escape," assured Mr. Sheridan, as he seemingly read the thoughts of the other, "this house has a cordon of officers around it."

There was a brushing of the portieres hiding a small room adjoining the one we were in and the figure of a large man emerged, draped in a gaudy bathrobe. It was the "late Colonel Farrington."

"Glad to see you, Colonel, or Leroy Henninger, or the Earl of Spencer, and upon many occasions Sir Mortimer David, the cleverest English confidence man at large," greeted Mr. Sheridan cordially.

Inspector Casey stared in astonishment.

"You do me a great honor," exclaimed the Colonel, looking straight at Mr. Sheridan, "you damned old fox. I fancy it is all up, so what is the bally use of pretending?"

"None whatever," rejoined Inspector Casey, as he began handcuffing his prisoners. "I must thank you, Mr. Sheridan, for this night's haul, and you may be sure any reward that is obtained will be handed to you."

"That's fine," returned Mr. Sheridan, "but send my reward to the Red Cross," and we left the house together. Getting into Mr. Sheridan's car, I said:

"And now where to?"

"You take the wheel, Sloan, I'm all fagged out. Drive to my apartment. I have an extra couch there upon which you may spend the night, as it is getting late," and my employer lapsed into a half-doze as we started away. Once in Mr. Sheridan's bachelor apartment, with the cozy comfort of its book-lined walls, he relaxed and said:

"My suspicions were first aroused by my failure to find Colonel Farrington's name in the British Army Register. I felt there was some swindling scheme on foot. The wax I found at the grave when taken in connection with the Hindu manservant caused me to doubt that 'Colonel Farrington' had ever lived. This wax was of a peculiar color and I was led to believe it had been employed by the Hindu in the preparation of the 'Colonel' for a trance. Such wax is used to stop the ears and nostrils of subjects undergoing long periods of suspended animation in India. After we had finished our examination of the empty grave, I next decided to have a look, if possible, at the Hindu servant employed

by Colonel Farrington. For this purpose I knocked at the Farrington home, and luck was with us, for the very gentleman I was so anxious to see answered the door and kindly directed us to the residence of Doctor Zimmerman."

"But how do you account for the fact that Doctor Zimmerman was deceived when he was called in to attend Doctor Farrington?"

"Our friend Sakuni Singh is an expert in the art of suspended animation, and no doubt found a willing pupil in the person of 'Colonel Farrington,' when the chance of defrauding the insurance company was explained. I've got the Hindu's biography. He must have made the Colonel look like a corpse to deceive the old doctor. Seeing the Hindu on the job gave me a clue to the sort of fraud that was being practiced and the empty grave clinched my conviction.

"My theory of the case was greatly strengthened by our interview with the maid, Nora Spradley. She stated that the prowler in her room looked like the ghost of 'Colonel Farrington' in all save that this prowler had a black beard.

"With this evidence I had but to make a thorough search through my files, and I found pictures and newspaper writeups of all three of these characters. I then had but to call in Inspector Casey and his men and gather them in."

A GOLD BRICK SWINDLE

THE fictional character who sold a rural visitor the Brooklyn Bridge, throwing in the City Hall as a bargain, belonged in the same class as Jack Lavender, according to Morris Weinberg, a real estate operator of Brooklyn.

On November 14 last, the story told by Mr. Weinberg set forth, after Lavender had been locked up on a charge of robbery, he was shown a splendid bargain in the way of real estate at 135 East Forty-fifth street. The house at that address was offered to him for $4,000, when Mr. Weinberg knew it was worth $12,000 or more.

It was a fine buy and the only trouble with the proposed transaction was that the three polite gentlemen who met him in the living-room, and afterward struck him severely on the head when he returned from the bank with the money, did not own the place.

According to Mr. Weinberg's charge, Lavender was one of the three men, although he was far too bewildered at the time to discern whether he was one of those who struck him or not.

Lavender was arrested as he was leaving Jefferson Market Court on $3,000 bail on a grand larceny charge in which Mr. Weinberg was not interested. Detective Mularney of the East Fifty-first street station, who had been searching for him since Mr. Weinberg reported his experience last November, made the arrest.

"I was induced to come to the house in East Forty-fifth street, but did not know that Lavender and two friends merely had furnished rooms there," Mr. Weinberg said. "When I got there they had assembled in the living-room and convinced me they owned the place. I went to the Bowery Bank to draw the money, and when I returned I was struck on the head and robbed."

Lavender, who says he is not a robber, but a sewer-on of buttons and maker of buttonholes in the garment industry, was arraigned before Magistrate McAndrews in Yorkville Court on a charge of robbery. His bail was fixed at $5,000, which he could not provide at once, at least, and he was locked up.

The Mudgee Diamonds

By PETER PERRY

CHAPTER ONE

THE Simpsons used to say that others had nothing on them, for they, too, had an uncle in Australia. Uncle Jim was the black sheep of the family, and was held in humorous disdain by the Simpsons, who were hard-working, sensible people. They had no patience with Uncle Jim's roving. Uncle Jim was Grandfather Simpson's youngest brother. Grandfather used to laugh about Jim's wild ideas, his daydreams and his get-rich-quick schemes, that all came to naught. Jim was still a wanderer, while Grandfather David, by dint of hard work and saving, had become a man of property.

The two brothers, Jim and David, had not seen each other for more than thirty years. Jim had been in Australia most of that time. He was only a tradition to the younger generation, Ted, Edith, Mary and Charles. They had never seen him. Their father, Dan Simpson, had met him but a few times; only Grandfather David had really known Uncle Jim.

So when a letter arrived saying he was coming to pay them a visit, they did not know whether to be amused or displeased.

"Will arrive in San Francisco about the middle of January," he wrote, "and will leave for Denver a few days later. I have accumulated my little pile. Have sold a diamond mine which I discovered near Mudgee a year ago, and am bringing a king's ransom in jewels, the finest that ever came out of the clay. After visiting you, I expect to go to New York and dispose of my collection of stones. And with huge capital to back my judgment, I have a proposition which I intend to place before a small and select group of the nation's leading financiers. With a few other men like myself behind such a project, we can make a millionaire look like a piker. Tell the boys they can throw up their jobs. There will be no more work for the Simpson family. And the girls can have their pick of the stones."

"What will the neighbors think if he goes about talking like that?" Edith asked, her brow wrinkled with worry.

"Humph!" grandfather grunted, "Jim will make the neighbors believe it."

Some days later they received a telegram from Salt Lake, announcing that Uncle Jim would be in Denver the following evening. Grandfather and Charles met him at the station and drove him home in the family flivver, the others anxiously awaiting his arrival.

Uncle Jim was a fine-looking man—they were agreeably surprised at his appearance. He was very straight and stylish, clean-shaved, with thick, silvery-gray hair and keen, dark eyes. He was a man of the world, a cosmopolitan. The younger Simpsons began to doubt their elders' judgment and began to wonder if Uncle Jim might not be a genius instead of a lunatic.

They were too well-bred to inquire about the diamonds, but after dinner Uncle Jim became expansive over grandfather's hard cider and volunteered the information that he had forwarded his treasure trove by express from San Francisco.

"It's too dangerous to carry such a fortune as that on your person," he told them. "I might have been robbed. They are the finest diamonds that ever came out of New South Wales—not as large as some, but of better color and the finest water. And the duty I paid on them! Whew!"

"Struck it rich at last, eh, Jim?" grand-

father winked slyly at Dan and knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"Oh, I've made and lost a dozen fortunes," Jim retorted carelessly.

"Come easy, go easy," grandfather commented dryly. "You always was a wizard at thinking up schemes to get rich without work, Jim." His grandfather caught the note of teasing in his voice, but Uncle Jim seemed oblivious to it. "Well, what's your latest scheme?"

"Oh, I cannot divulge that now. But wait till you see the stones tomorrow," Uncle Jim changed the subject neatly. "And you, Edith and Mary, may have your choice of the lot, a stone apiece, and your old uncle will have them set for you any way you please."

The stones arrived the following day. Uncle Jim opened the package before them all, disclosing a handful of wonderful diamonds of the purest blue-white color, cut and uncut. The girls gasped with pleasure. The gems were magnificent and were a fortune indeed. The boys nudged each other in surprise.

Even grandfather admitted he might have misjudged Jim. The girls selected their stones—Edith a pear-shaped one for the pendant of a necklace; Mary, a smaller one for a ring.

"Well, that's what I've picked up during the last year," Uncle Jim said, cascading the brilliant gems from one palm to the other carelessly. "I got the tip from a native that a diamond had been found in a sandy hill up beyond Mudgee. I put all the money I could raise into some equipment and went up from Sydney. I put some natives to work sluicing away the hill, and after I cleaned up all that was easiest to work, I sold the mine and here I am."

"You oughtn't to have sold a mine like that, Jim," grandfather told him.

"Oh, I have bigger ventures in mind."

"Better put the money in the bank," grandfather said.

Uncle Jim laughed merrily at these cautions, and the young Simpsons were won over to his side.

All the afternoon of the second day of his visit, Uncle Jim sat by the front window of the living room and could not be lured away. He seemed absorbed in the newspapers, but behind this screen Edith caught his eyes watching the street intently. When the expressman stopped before their house, Uncle Jim sprang up and answered the door.

"Who is it for, Uncle Jim?" Edith called excitedly.

"For me," he replied rather shortly; then more politely: "Just a little package I've been expecting."

Uncle Jim signed the expressman's receipt, slipped the package in his pocket and went up to his room without further satisfying Edith's curiosity. He came down a few minutes later looking vexed and disturbed.

"What's the matter, Uncle Jim?" Edith asked. "You look as if you had heard bad news."

"So I have," he answered surlily, putting on his overcoat. His usual genial manner had completely vanished. "I'm going downtown and may be late getting back. Don't wait dinner for me," he said and, taking his hat and stick, he went out, slamming the door.

It was the last Edith ever saw of him, striding down the walk, slashing at the leafless lilac bushes with his stick and scattering the snow from their bare branches.

CHAPTER TWO

WHEN Uncle Jim did not return that night the Simpsons notified the police, giving a description of his appearance and telling of the diamonds he had in his possession. The stones were not to be found in his room, and the Simpsons concluded he had gone downtown to place them in the vault of some bank and had been waylaid and robbed and possibly murdered.

In the morning Carter Chadwick of the city detective bureau came out to question the family. They told him all they knew about Uncle Jim and his career. He was shown the stones Uncle Jim gave his nieces. Carter Chadwick turned them over in the

palm of his hand reflectively, then carried them to the light. He took a glass from his pocket, adjusted it to his eye and examined them.

"H'm!" was his only comment as he returned them to the girls. He turned again to grandfather. "Did you notice anything peculiar about your brother?" he asked.

"Well, Jim always was peculiar," David Simpson admitted.

"Was he changed much?"

"Yes, he was changed—seemed smarter than he used to be. Jim always did talk big, but I never thought he had any brains back of his mouth. Reckon I might have misjudged him. Then he seemed awfully young for his age; didn't seem any older than Dan here, though he's sixty-three, just ten years younger than I am. But Jim always was a good-looking feller. He was as slim and handsome a young man as you ever laid eyes upon."

"Have you any picture of him?" Chadwick asked.

"Nothing except this one that was taken when he was about twenty," grandfather said, producing an old daguerreotype. "Doesn't look much like him now—but then you wouldn't think that other feller was me, would you? He, he, he!" grandfather chuckled reminiscently.

"Did you notice any mental peculiarities?" Chadwick inquired. "Any aberration—any little thing that surprised or puzzled you?"

"Well, now, yes," David Simpson answered thoughtfully. "He didn't seem to remember things, like about the time the school-house burned up when he was a kid, and he didn't remember the name of that red-headed girl he was so sweet on when he was about fifteen—Margery Blinn, her name was. I wanted to tell him she was a widow now and living up at Boulder, but I didn't get to talk to him much—he was always running on so about himself and how he was going to get richer."

"Ever been any insanity in your family?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" grandfather exclaimed indignantly. "Jim was the only crazy one I ever heard of, and he was smart enough in some ways—just lacks horse sense, Jim does."

"Was he ever subject to spells of melancholia?"

"Not him; no, sir. Jim was the most optimistic feller you ever saw. If you're thinking he might have got morbid and killed himself, I reckon you're wrong. 'Tain't like Jim."

"I did have something of the sort in mind," replied Chadwick, "but you've given me another idea now."

"I always draw my own theories about the crimes in the newspapers," the old man muttered, "and a heap of times I'm right; but now I'm terribly worried. I'm afraid somebody's killed poor Jim for those jewels."

"Perhaps—perhaps not," Chadwick said laconically.

"And yet Jim may turn up all right. He always does," grandfather consoled himself; "but he oughtn't to have carried those diamonds about with him like that. Somebody might have followed him clear from Australia just to rob him."

"Why, of course!" Chadwick exclaimed as if he were surprised. Then he clapped grandfather on the back heartily. "I see you're going to be a great help to me in solving this mystery. I'll have to come back and talk to you again some time," he said as he left.

"Smart young feller," grandfather commented.

CHAPTER THREE

A YOUNG man named Stuart Nicholls, who said he was a private detective, called on the Simpsons a few days after Uncle Jim's disappearance and asked their permission to work on the case. He offered to assist them without charge, as he said he was a man of independent means and took up only those cases which interested him. The Simpsons welcomed his aid gladly, as they had just begun to realize the seriousness of Uncle Jim's disappearance and to fear for his life. Nicholls

asked to see Uncle Jim's room and his things. Grandfather went up with him, and the detective spent several hours examining every inch of the room, and even the clothing Uncle Jim had left.

"He's a very scientific feller," was grandfather's opinion. "He says he thinks poor Jim must have gone out of his mind and wandered off somewhere, though how he could tell that from his clothes beats me —unless he thought Jim must have been out of his mind when he bought that checked suit. I never knew Jim was such a dandy before—pretty gay for a man of his age."

When Chadwick called again he seemed downcast and disheartened over his failure to locate Jim Simpson.

"I am no nearer to finding your brother now than ever," he confessed to grandfather. "I am forced to fall back on my first theory of suicide."

"I don't know why you think that," David Simpson protested querulously.

"I don't like to tell you the reason," the detective said, "but my theory is based entirely on the fact that the diamonds he gave your granddaughters are paste."

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed grandfather. "Well, I might have guessed it. If that ain't just like Jim!"

"Is it? Well, you see, despondent over his life failure to make good, he tried to deceive you, and then fearing his deception might be disclosed, in a fit of melancholy he may have taken his life."

"Maybe he was robbed and killed for those fake jewels," grandfather suggested, "and the thieves didn't know they were fake."

"Possibly; but that doesn't explain why your brother was carrying around such a collection of paste jewels. There must have been some reason, and any first-class crook would know in a minute they were paste. No, I think there's some reason behind those paste diamonds we haven't hit upon yet. I have another theory I may as well tell you," Chadwick announced uncomfortably. "You may be able to throw some light upon the idea. It is this: Your brother may have stolen the diamonds."

"Jim?" grandfather exclaimed, startled.

"Yes. You know nothing of what his life has been these last thirty years. You admit he was the black sheep of the family. Suppose he committed this robbery in Australia, with a partner or a gang. When he came here he discovered the stones were paste and thought his partner had played him false. He would go out immediately—if his partner were here—to settle the score, wouldn't he? And perhaps he got into a quarrel and was killed."

"A thief? 'Tain't like Jim," the old man insisted stubbornly.

"Well, it is just a theory—we have no proof yet," Chadwick assured him. He did not add that he had cabled the police of Melbourne and Sydney.

"This other detective, Nicholls, who was here, said Jim might have gone out of his mind," grandfather volunteered.

"Nicholls?" Chadwick queried, surprised.

"Yes; he's a private detective. Says he just works on cases that interest him."

"I never heard of him," Chadwick said shortly. "These amateur detectives do more harm than good. What did he do?"

"Went all through Jim's trunk and his clothes and everything."

"What did this Nicholls look like?"

Grandfather told him.

"I wouldn't put too much confidence in a private detective," Chadwick advised. "In a case like this, when it is a question of locating a missing person, one man can do nothing as compared to the police force. Our men are combing the city, and the police of other cities are also on the lookout for your brother, and some day we'll find him, dead or alive. But if this man Nicholls comes here again you notify me at once. I'd like to see him."

"I declare!" grandfather said, after Chadwick had gone, "I do believe that young feller was jealous of that private detective. Now, I think I'll just call up Mr. Nicholls and ask him if he found out anything about Jim. Where's that card he gave me?" Grandfather explored his pockets and produced the card. It read "Stuart L. Nicholls," and in the lower corner "Chateau

Apartments." Grandfather looked up the number in the telephone directory, called the apartments and inquired for Mr. Nicholls.

"Why, Mr. Nicholls moved to Los Angeles about a year ago," the girl at the switchboard told him.

"Was it Mr. Stuart L. Nicholls?"

"Yes."

"Was he a private detective?" grandfather asked, bewildered.

"No; he was a real estate dealer."

CHAPTER FOUR

IN Montclair, an outlying residence district of Denver, there stands an old wreck of a mansion, half destroyed by fire many years ago and now buried in such a tangle of brush and vines that it might well pass for a haunted house. But no ghosts have been seen there.

A little boy passing the old ruin, in a spirit of exploration, ventured over the enclosing fence. Every snow-covered branch was glistening and sparkling in the clear winter sunshine like an old-fashioned, frosted Christmas card. The little boy peeped into the old barn at the back, but it was all black inside. The glare of the snow across the prarie was so brilliant in the sunlight that it had blinded his eyes to the shadows of the barn. The big doors of the carriage-house were loose on their rusty hinges, the timber rotting. The little boy swung one of them back. What a place the old barn would make for adventure in summer! The brilliant sunshine flooded through the open door and fell upon a strange object. The little boy gasped. There was a car inside—a big, shiny, black touring car—and over the edge of the door a man's hand hung in a way no living hand ever hung—a claw-like hand, stiff and frozen in the cold.

The little boy stared, loose-jawed with terror, his knees weak and wobbly. Then he turned and ran as if the devil were after him. The little boy's mother notified the police.

It was Jim Simpson's hand the child had seen. Sergeant Kelly, with two officers and a police surgeon, was detailed to answer the call. Two reporters swung onto the wagon as it left the station, and Chadwick, who had a hunch it would be Jim Simpson when the news came to headquarters, rode out with the patrol. The doctor said the body had been there for several hours. A bullet had been sent through Jim Simpson's heart. They did not find his jewels.

Chadwick led the search of the grounds and the burned house. There was not much to see within those gaunt, bare walls except the tangle of charred timbers. But the stone steps leading to the basement were unharmed by fire or time. Chadwick pushed aside a fallen beam and clambered down into the wreckage. Kelly followed him. The steps were curiously free from débris, but if they had been used the snow had covered any sign or trace. Below a passage opened up around a mass of rubbish, and Chadwick came to a stout door barred and locked. It was, he thought, the door to the old wine-cellar. Kelly shouted up to the men above:

"Hey, you fellers, come down here and burst open this door!

The door broken, the officers flashed their lights into the darkness beyond. Inside the tiny, vault-like room, which had no window, they found another body huddled in the corner—a big, fat, bald-headed old man. They thought at first he was dead, but there was still life. He had been overcome by the cold and was half-frozen. The surgeon applied first aid and they rushed him to the General Hospital. He was uninjured except from exposure, and it was thought he would recover.

"That ruin has been the rendezvous of a gang of bandits," said Chadwick on the run back to town.

"Yeh," Detective Kelly agreed. "Betcha this old bird is one of them," he indicated the unconscious man with a jerk of his thumb. "Maybe he threatened to squeal on them or something and they locked him up there."

"I don't think so," Chadwick dissented.

"Huh? Why not?"

"They wouldn't risk his being found alive if they thought he would squeal."

"Humph!" Kelly grunted. "Maybe they're headed for South America with the loot."

"But I have a hunch——" Chadwick began and broke off. "Well, we'll wait and hear the man's story," he concluded. Chadwick's brow wrinkled and he lapsed into reverie, his arms folded across his breast, his hat pulled down over his eyes.

"What's eating on you?" Kelly demanded presently.

Chadwick laughed and came out of his absorption. "Kelly, did you notice anything familiar about Jim Simpson's appearance?"

"Simpson? No."

"Doesn't he look like Frisco Eddie, who escaped from San Quentin a year or two ago? You remember when they brought him through here, taking him out there?"

"Maybe," said Kelly. "But that bird must be Jim Simpson, and they bumped him off for those phony jewels."

"You have no imagination, Kelly."

"Well, facts is facts," Kelly returned obstinately.

CHAPTER FIVE

IT seemed that Kelly was right. David Simpson identified the dead man as his brother. But Detective Chadwick insisted on delaying the burial, while he wired San Quentin for the fingerprints and Bertillon measurements of Frisco Eddie, alias Ed McCarthy. For, though the Australian police had reported no diamond robberies, Chadwick still suspected that David Simpson's wandering brother had not spent thirty years away from his relatives without reason, and that he had not come by his collection of diamonds honestly. It had occurred to him, too, that the rest of the stones may have been genuine. Perhaps, with a sense of economy, Jim Simpson had urged paste gems upon his nieces.

"In the meantime, there is an old pal of Frisco Eddie's here—Arnold King, he calls himself. He's an old con man who used to work with Eddie. Hunt him up and bring him in," Chadwick ordered in a conference with Kelly, "and we'll see what he has to say for himself. He's pretending to go straight now, but he's got a record as long as your arm."

"I've seen him," said Kelly. "Nice-looking feller—good talker."

"Yes, under forty—well educated."

"I'll fetch him in if he's in town. What's the hunch you're working on now?" Kelly asked.

"Well, of course I haven't the facts yet," Chadwick began, "but I believe that Frisco Eddie or Ed McCarthy is really Jim Simpson."

It was several days before the man in the hospital recovered sufficiently to be examined. When Chadwick saw him again he lay in bed, his frozen hands bandaged in great pads of cotton, his big fat face still livid and flabby like tallow, his bald head shiny as a billiard ball. But his mind was perfectly clear again, the nurse said, and he would soon be none the worse for his experience. Chadwick drew up a chair beside him.

"I'm Chadwick of the detective force," he said by way of introduction. "I'd like to hear your story."

"First, I want you to notify my brother, David Simpson, that I am here," the man answered. "I asked the nurse to, but she said she couldn't without your orders. I'm Jim Simpson."

"Jim Simpson!" Chadwick exclaimed in surprise. "Jim Simpson is dead."

"I've always been considered a little peculiar," the man replied, "but I reckon I know my own name. Now, will you phone Dave?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," Chadwick replied coolly, and he gave the message to a nurse. Then, turning back to the patient:

"David Simpson identified a body we found as that of his brother," he warned the man, thinking his story was a hoax.

"David hasn't seen me for thirty years," the man retorted. "Why did he think I was dead?"

Chadwick told him briefly.

"That's the fellow that has been following me," Jim Simpson said. "Was he a big, handsome fellow, with gray hair, and all dolled up like a movie actor?"

"Yes."

"So Dave thought that was me, did he?" the man chuckled gleefully. "Well, that crook got the boat at Honolulu. We became right friendly. I reckon I talked too blame much. Dave always said I did. I told the crook where I was going, how I had got some diamonds and all about Dave's family—even showed the stones to him, like a fool. Then somebody began following me in San Francisco—it must have been one of his gang—so I aimed to throw 'em off the track. I went to the express office when this fellow was trailing me, sent an empty box to my brother, and I talked real loud so he could hear. Then, just to be safe, I sent the genuine stones to a bank in Frisco. I guess they're still safe there, all right. I thought everything was O. K. till I got off the train here the other night. A man came up and said he was my brother Dave Simpson. He put me in a car and knocked me over the head. The next I knew I was locked up in a cellar. I don't know what they had it in for me for, though," the patient complained.

"I'll tell you," said Chadwick. "The man on the steamer was Ed McCarthy, known as Frisco Eddie, who escaped from San Quentin about a year ago. Some of his gang followed you, learned you had sent the empty package to your brother, and thought it contained the genuine diamonds. But you didn't count on their going the length they did to get possession of them. They kidnaped you, and Frisco Eddie impersonated you and went to your brother's house in order to claim the empty package. And because you had written your relatives about the stones, he sent another package containing paste jewels, which he opened and displayed before the family. He was very generous and gave the girls two of the stones. The next day your package arrived. McCarthy took it up to his room, discovered it was empty, and immediately left the house. When he told his gang the box was fully, "do you remember the name of that empty they probably thought he had cheated them, got into a dispute and McCarthy was killed."

"Yes, that's right," Jim Simpson said. "I heard them quarreling. They had a big row just outside my door. One fellow said: 'If you're straight, why don't you open the package? Why did you break the seals?' he said. 'You agreed to bring the package to us unopened. If you didn't steal the rocks, you tried to.' And then they started shooting."

"McCarthy paid for his greed with his life," said Chadwick.

Just then he was called to the telephone. It was Sergeant Kelly speaking.

"I got that bird, Arnold King," he announced triumphantly over the wire. "The Chief put him through the third degree and he has confessed to shooting Ed McCarthy. And, say, after the shooting he went to the Simpson house and passed himself off for a private detective—called himself Stuart Nicholls—and went through McCarthy's things looking for the stones."

When Chadwick returned to Jim Simpson's room in the hospital he found David Simpson standing on the threshold, puzzled.

"Don't you recognize your brother?" Chadwick asked David.

"Hello, Dave!" the fat man in the bed grinned.

"Why, I never saw that man before," David stammered. "What do you mean—my brother? Jim's dead."

"That wasn't Jim. He was an impostor," Chadwick explained. "This is Jim."

"Can't be," David insisted stubbornly.

"Ask him some question to satisfy yourself," Chadwick suggested to David.

"Well, if you're Jim," David said doubtred-headed girl you were so sweet on years ago?"

"Sure; Margery Blinn. What's become of her?" Jim Simpson shouted.

"Jim! Why, Jim! You fat old whale! How was I to know it was you?" David Simpson cried, stumbling forward.

And when Chadwick closed the door on them David was pawing and fumbling at his prodigal brother like a clumsy puppy.

The Lifters

By WALTER W. DICKSON

WELL-GROOMED, silver-tongued and slick-haired was Rodney St. Clair, advance agent for a quartet of fun-makers known as "The Lifters," with headquarters at Seattle. They did not sing or do a dance, but they did steal safes. With swashbuckling dash, under the very eyes of the police, safes of the smaller business establishments, regardless of weight, were toted bodily to a waiting automobile and whirled away to some isolated spot where a ten-pound sledge soon made scrap out of them. Old petermen and burglars blushed with shame when they read of the daring exploits of this gang, especially when a motorcycle "bull" was stuck up and handcuffed to his machine. The police had no clues. The fellows that lost their safes were sad, very sad, and demanded results. The public read the papers and laughed long and loud at the exploits of the Lifters.

On a certain day in January Rodney was planning their next theft, and was rehearsing his part in the job in the vicinity of Jones's cigar store at Fourth and Pike streets, where the flow of humanity was on the flood during business hours. In this locality that meant midnight. His work in this instance resolved itself into getting acquainted, and he did that speedily. Jones, the proprietor, called him "Sainty," because he kept the cash register ringing.

Rodney carefully scrutinized the locks that were on the doors and estimated to within five pounds of what the safe weighed. He took note of the time Jones customarily went to the bank and when he returned, and observed that Saturday morning was the best time to attack Jones, for on this particular morning he cashed workmen's pay checks. This money, surely a goodly haul, reposed in the safe the previous night. Rodney found out where all the nearby police were in the early morning and planned his schedule accordingly.

When he had gathered enough information he patted the affable Jones on the back, purchased another handful of cigars and bowed himself out. On the sidewalk he stopped long enough to take final mental note of the vicinity, then he passed jauntily up the street.

At one o'clock Saturday morning, in lodgings occupied by the Lifters on Boren avenue, sat Rodney St. Clair amid clouds of smoke, deftly making a sketch of the interior of Jones's store. The sketch finished, he lighted another cigarette and pushed the drawing out for the other members of the gang to see.

"The cop on the corner steps off at two-eighteen and strolls down Pike to Third street, meets the bird that takes his place, and they talk fifteen minutes. We take the tin can at two-twenty and hit for Pine street, then to First and then south. Do you get me?" Rod flipped the paper with a finger as he looked up at the trio. "Same old way—nothing changed."

"And the lock on the front door; will the big chisel do?" asked Keefe, who was a broad-shouldered, welterweight prize-fighter when not too lazy to train.

"We cau use a wax match to pry that off," laughed Rod. "Huf, have you picked a car?"

"I got my lamps on a fine Reo that belongs to a rich guy. He's too cheap to pay garage rent and parks her in the street all night," answered Kid Huffman, his pale, thin face wreathed in a cynical smile.

"It's about time you got us a good one!" grinned Sandow, a thick-wristed hoodlum, noted for his great strength, and upon whom

the gang depended for the heaviest juggling of the safes. "That last Lizzie you copped almost busted when we chucked the safe in."

"Get the car now. We'll wait here," ordered Rod, as he looked at his watch.

Huf grinned, pulled a soft felt hat down over his eyes, put on a long overcoat, and slipped out of the room. On Madison street, just two blocks away, he walked unhesitatingly up to a red Reo, slid into the driver's seat, unlocked the engine with a false key and was off.

The owner of the car, just going to bed, chancing to look out of the window, saw his car move away. He rushed to the telephone and gave the police a description of the automobile.

The Lifters piled into the machine and at two-twenty drove off and stopped in front of Jones's store. The four, all wearing long overcoats, loitered over to the door. Screened by the other three, Sandow quickly ripped off the lock with a jimmy.

Sandow entered, closing the door after him, while the three outside nonchalantly smoked cigarettes, keeping a furtive eye on the street. Sandow, in the dark, leaped lightly over the counter to the small safe, braced himself with one hand against the wall, gripped the safe with the other, pulled it out into the aisle, then to the end of the counter. He dragged it over the tiling to the front door and tapped lightly on the glass. The men on the sidewalk opened the door; Sandow, with a heave, rolled the safe out.

The men, with overcoats hanging open, stooped and picked up the six-hundred-pound box. Huf, in front, took a back-hand hold. Rod and Keefe each took a side, while Sandow brought up the rear. They carried it across the sidewalk to the machine, where Huf quickly stepped aside and the safe was heaved into the back seat. Quietly and without haste they re-entered the car. Huf took the wheel and they drove to Pine street, where speed was increased. They then drove to a remote spot near the Duwarmish river, where the safe was dumped out on the sand. Sandow took a sledge. With joking and by-play he struck a few mighty blows and crashed in a side. Rodney instantly began sorting the contents and lifted out a well-filled bag of currency and silver. Checks and papers were left scattered about. They leisurely drove off, returning to Seattle in a roundabout way.

It was five-thirty in the morning when the gang reached their own neighborhood, abandoned the car and started cheerfully homeward.

A policeman in the distance had seen them drive by and, being on the lookout for a red car, he hurried to it and checked the numbers, then started after the gang. He was nearly a block behind them when he saw them enter their rooming-house. When he came to the place he could not be sure which doorbell to ring.

He rang a bell, however. The sleepy landlady told him she had heard the men come in, and pointed out their rooms, third floor back. The policeman softly mounted the stairs and knocked on the door. Rodney opened it a trifle and saw him. The crooks held a hasty conference, then the window at the rear of the house was raised and Keefe accurately dropped the money bag into the open ash-can below.

The Lifters then invited the policeman in and argued and explained that they had stolen no automobile.

While this was going on Pedro Dominico, just starting on the morning round, drove his garbage wagon into the deserted alley, climbed down from the seat, picked up the very ash-can that contained the swag, heaved it upon his broad shoulders and dumped its contents into the empty wagon. Hearing the enchanting clink of coins, he climbed upon the hind wheel and investigated. He soon found the sack, hastily opened it, and with distended eyes saw the money. He was dazed for a moment, then he leaped onto the seat and drove out of the alley in great haste. He turned down one street, up another and then stopped to examine his find more carefully.

As he picked over the coin and currency of large and small denominations he trembled.

"I could go to Italy and be a big man

on this," he told himself. He thought of his poor mother in far-away Lombardy, the old home. In a frenzy he stuffed the money into his shirt, leaped from the wagon and ran down the street.

Having rid themselves at last of the suspicious and bothersome policeman—who left still thinking them guilty, but realizing he had no proof—the gang laughed scornfully, and Keefe hurried down to the backyard to get the loot. The men in the upper room heard Keefe's cry of surprise, went to the window and saw the perplexed Keefe and the empty ash-can.

"The garbageman emptied it," said Keefe weakly.

"His wagon must be near here. Let's find it," suggested Rod, and they hurried into the alley, separated and began their search.

Sandow's peculiar shrill whistle cut the air and the Lifters came together. Boldly they went to the wagon, climbed in and ransacked the garbage.

"The Italian has the dough! We'll stick around," growled Rod.

They had not long to wait, for Pedro soon came up the street whistling. He stopped and patted the muzzles of his horses, took his coat from the seat, put it on, and strolled into a grocery store, where he telephoned the garbage department.

Huf entered the store, made a purchase and listened to the telephone conversation.

"Senda da man to getta da horse an' wag'." Pedro kissed his fingers. "In tree weeka I quit." He hung up the receiver and stepped jauntily into the street.

Huf quickly joined the gang and reported.

"The wop is going to Italy. Let's squeeze him now."

"No, no!" retorted Rod quickly. "Let him have the dough! We'll grab another safe. It would be like a banker taking a job at ditch-digging for us to tackle a strong-arm job. We'd ruin our reputation as scientists; besides, it's dangerous. Let's cut it, and leave such work for the boobs."

"Scientists be damned! No guy is going to sweep up my jack!" growled Sandow, and he was backed up by Huf and Keefe.

"All right; let's trail him. I'm game," said Rod, shrugging his shoulders. "But, get this, we're only a bunch of farm hands!"

They separated again and shadowed their man.

On Second avenue Pedro entered a clothing store, picked out a fine suit of clothes, and paid for it from a huge roll of currency.

Out of the clothing store into a jewelry store went Pedro, with Sandow at the shadow this time. Here he bought an expensive watch and looked at some diamonds.

Next he went to a trunk store and purchased a trunk and suitcase.

Outside, Pedro bought a newspaper, gave the boy a dollar and told him to keep the change. Then he boarded a street car to Jackson street, walked down a block and entered his dilapidated house. Pedro handed the landlady some money and sent her on an errand; then he lit a cigar and walked into his room.

When the woman left the house Rod, Keefe and Sandow boldly entered. They came upon Pedro bending over the lower drawer of his dresser. Sandow leaped forward and pinned his arms to his sides.

Like a flash a hand with a clubbed gun reached out from behind a curtain, struck Sandow and he dropped like a clouted rabbit. At the same instant revolvers in the hands of deputy sheriffs were pressed against the stomachs of Rod and Keefe, who raised their hands above their heads.

Sheriff Wichstar stepped from behind the curtain just as a deputy entered with Huf, who was handcuffed.

The sheriff gripped the Italian's hand.

"Pedro, I'm badly in need of an Italian deputy. Will you quit the garbage wagon and take the job?"

"I taka da job, Meester Shereef," grinned Pedro.

"You got us, all right," smiled Rodney, "but just how did this thing explode?"

"Pedro is honest. He brought the swag to the county jail and happened to find me there," grinned Wichstar. "I knew you'd be too cheap to let him keep it, so we made the frame and you fellows hung your own pictures."

The Sharpshooter Mystery

By HOWARD PHILIP RHOADES

DETECTIVE WALTER HATTON and his friend, Carl Dean, manager of the Temple Vaudeville Theatre, came out of the theatrical man's office and dropped into seats in the last row.

"Just in time," said Dean, as two girls, doing a "sister act," made their last bow and retired.

The drop rose on a full stage with a forest setting. Hatton's practiced eyes were passing rapidly over the white targets, the tables loaded with guns, all the paraphernalia of a sharpshooter's act, when there was applause. A tall, dark man, with brilliant, black eyes, wearing a suit suggesting the regulation army captain's uniform, approached the footlights.

Hatton's eyes brightened. He was interested in crack shots. The enthusiastic tales circulated around Headquarters regarding "that fellow at the Temple this week" had brought him over.

"Good-looking chap," the detective commented as the man billed as "Capt. James Bothwell, the American sharpshooter," bowed and took a rifle from his assistant.

"Yes, and he can shoot," said Carl Dean, the house manager. "Wait till you see his stuff from the balcony."

Hatton bent forward, watching the crack shot as he hit the bull's-eye of target after target. Swinging marks, clay animals, globes of glass, living flames all were struck instantly by bullets pumped with unerring marksmanship from the rifles in Bothwell's hands.

Once or twice, for suspense, he missed. Then, with a peculiar grin, he would take careful aim and send the bullet through the center. It was after such a moment, when he was bowing in response to general applause, that his assistant handed him two guns. Captain Bothwell smilingly accepted them and stepped from the stage.

"Here's the thrill," said Dean. "He goes to the balcony, adding sixty or seventy feet to the distance, and hits his marks just as readily."

There was a ripple of interest. Faces in the first rows on the lower floor were turned upward.

"Makes them uneasy to have him shooting over their heads," whispered Dean. "Some of them would move if they didn't want to appear scared."

"But *isn't* it risky?" Hatton asked. "Supposing——"

"Not a chance," laughed the manager. "I saw to that. He's been doing this in the West for a year before hitting Broadway. I made him prove it was safe before I allowed it."

Dean was interrupted by the crack of shots. In the front of the balcony, out of sight of the manager and the detective, Captain Bothwell had started to shoot. At first the reports were slow, as if he were trying the range. Then they accelerated, coming so rapidly as to sound like a veritable fusillade. There was a salvo of applause. Unerringly Bothwell had broken every target.

During the short pause which followed the tension of the audience and upward glances made Hatton guess Bothwell was preparing to shoot again. Now, the detective could sense, the actor was aiming. Again the continuous roar of the rapid-fire rifle was heard. Bang, bang, bang, bang! The shots blended into a steady din. There came an instant, just before the applause, with the house silent, the echoes dying away, the thin smoke drifting downward.

Then a young man, far down in front

on the lower floor, startled the audience with an awful scream. Standing upright among the hundreds of seated people, he waved madly at the sharpshooter.

"Stop—you've shot—you've killed——" came back through the house from his lips in agonized tones.

The house manager and the detective were rushing forward almost instantly. In the second row people were gathering, as speedily as the closely placed seats would permit, around a crumpled figure. Walter Hatton, as he pushed in, saw that they were looking at a young girl whose beautiful face was pallid, whose eyes were closed, and whose blonde hair where it fell over her neck was bathed in blood.

"I'm the manager," shouted Dean back across the disordered house, his brisk, chubby figure motivated by an intense appeal. "A lady has been shot. But there's no more danger. Stop your act, Captain Bothwell. Keep your seats, everybody. The next act will proceed at once."

Above were sounds of disorder.

"Don't let him get away," some one shouted. "He killed a woman with that gun. He ought to be lynched."

Feeling the normal order dissolving into chaos, Detective Walter Hatton, who was just behind Dean, raised his voice to an usher:

"There's a police station next-door. Rush for several officers to guard the doors. No one must escape until this is investigated."

The usher complied. In a few minutes policemen were on guard.

"I'll call Headquarters and tell them I want a squad of detectives. Meanwhile, I'll see about this girl," Hatton went on.

The young man who had given the alarm by screaming was crouched beside the unconscious girl, his arms about her, crying and moaning. Hatton struggled to break his frenzied hold upon the girl. Handicapped by the small space between seats, he made little progress until aided by a distinguished-looking elderly man who came up from the other side.

"Calm yourself, my boy," ordered this man, who had a carefully trimmed white beard and a pink, healthful face. "My car is outside," he went on to Hatton. "I'll take her to the hospital."

Hatton gave him a sharp glance and seemed to recognize him. The detective nodded. The elderly man lifted the slight figure of the girl in his arms, her bleeding head resting upon his shoulder. Followed by her escort and the house officer, he strode past women who had fainted from excitement and through the crowds which already were congregating at the guarded doors.

Hatton passed among the people, assuring them they would soon be allowed to leave, but that all would have to submit to a search for weapons. The orchestra struck up a lively tune. Soon the next act was under way. Then the detective, heading for Dean's office, met the manager with Captain Bothwell, the sharpshooter.

The actor was very pale. He gulped as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. He was protesting his innocence.

"It couldn't have been one of my bullets," he said. "It wasn't possible."

Dean placed Bothwell in charge of the house policeman. The actor sank weakly into a chair. Then the manager and Detective Hatton returned to the foyer, where an increasing crowd of people was clamoring to get out.

"You can't let them go, Dean," warned the detective. "I don't want to get you into trouble. But there may be some one in this crowd we should know about."

Up the lobby came a group of detectives and uniformed officers. Then the audience was allowed gradually to drift out after a search. For fifteen minutes the emptying process went on. Then a policeman appeared on the broad landing of the stairs leading to the balcony.

"Mr. Hatton," he called and pointed upward. Hatton hurried in that direction, and found, close to the door of a fire exit, a thin, gnarled little man upon whom two detectives were slipping handcuffs.

"First he goes downstairs," reported a big plainclothes man. "He must have seen some one he was afraid of, for he comes back and tries to unlock this door and sneak out. And look at the gat he was

packing. He's the only one in the audience who carried a gun."

Detective Hatton examined a large revolver which had been taken from the prisoner.

"Poor place to be with a gun like that, McDermott," Hatton commented, as he stared at the fellow's shallow face. The one good eye of Lefty McDermott, gunman, raised from the floor.

"I never shot nobody," he protested. "Jist came in to see the show. Look at the cartridges if you don't believe me."

Hatton did so. The six-shooter was fully loaded.

"It hain't been shot. Look how clean it is."

"Where were you sitting, McDermott?" asked the detective.

The gunman indicated the extreme left of the balcony.

"Who saw you there?"

"Nobody who knows me. I was alone."

"Lock him up, Kennedy. We'll question him later."

"Somebody'd have heard his gun if he shot," said Dean.

"True, but lots of people who see public crimes won't admit it for fear of having to testify," replied Hatton. "McDermott is one of the most daring gunmen we know. He may have shot from an entirely different gun, or he may have already cleaned off the smudge made by firing a single chamber."

"But why didn't he hide his gun?" asked the manager.

"Maybe he didn't figure we'd examine the whole audience. As soon as the people are out, Dean, we must search the place from top to bottom. I want to talk to all your employees. While waiting, let's see Captain Bothwell."

In Dean's private office the actor was nervously pacing the floor. He turned to them eagerly.

"This will ruin me, Mr. Dean," he said. "Isn't there something we can do to get at the truth?"

"You can help by answering my questions, Captain Bothwell," retorted the detective. "This young lady who was shot—did you know her?"

"I didn't know there was a girl shot until that man yelled. I know neither of them. In fact, I hardly know anybody in New York."

"Had trouble with any one in New York?"

"Never saw the town until Sunday. I'm as sure it wasn't my bullet as——"

"How many bullets did you fire in that last succession?"

"Forty, I think."

"Of what calibre?"

"All .22-longs."

"Can you account for all the bullets you fire during the act?"

"Possible not. My estimate of the number fired might not correspond exactly with the bullets picked up beside my rear screen, because some bullets splinter and break up."

"That's all, Captain Bothwell. For the present I'll ask you to remain under detention."

The actor sadly shook his head. "I know things are against me," he said, "but I'm innocent. I——"

He was interrupted by a newcomer—the distinguished-looking elderly man with the white beard who had taken the girl to the hospital. He extended his hand to Dean.

"Pierce Seymour is my name," he said.

Dean introduced Detective Hatton, who did not betray the fact that he knew Seymour.

"I'm from the Seymour store," the elderly man went on. "You see, Mr. Dean, Mrs. Seymour and I are vaudeville fans. Tonight Mrs. Seymour is away, but I came as usual. I placed my hat and coat in our vacant seat on the aisle; that's how I happened to be sitting next to the young lady. I came to tell you about her. The bullet penetrated the back of her head, swerving downward, and just skirting the lower part of the brain. They're probing for it, and they say there's a chance for her recovery."

"You didn't know her, Mr. Seymour?"

"No, but I got her name. It's Nan Redding. A pretty little thing, and that lad, Lathrop, who was with her, is all cut up. He's engaged to her, and all the way to the

hospital he kept speaking about an actor who was infatuated with her."

Detective Hatton looked up with interest. "I'd better go to the hospital and see her," he said; "but we must see Dean's house employees first. I'll have Kennedy telephone the hospital and tell them to hold Lathrop. Now, Dean, let's talk to your people."

One by one the entire staff on duty when the shooting occurred were brought into Dean's office. Several ushers were questioned without results. They had heard the shots and knew the girl was hit—beyond that, nothing. Hatton waived examination of the stage hands until he heard one of them had been in the front of the house.

This man, a harmless-looking individual named Yerges, admitted he had been on his way to the motion picture booth in the balcony, to return a borrowed screwdriver, when the shooting occurred. But he said he knew nothing about it. "Call in Gorman Jacks, the operator," ordered Dean.

The motion picture operator was a squinting, thin-lipped young man of twenty-five. Like several of the ushers questioned, he appeared nervous. He explained that he had been engaged rewinding a film at the time of the shooting. "Yes," he admitted, shifting uneasily in his chair, "I heard the shots as I hear them every night, but I paid no attention until I heard the yelling." A few more questions and Gorman Jacks, the operator, was allowed to go.

"Tells about the same story as the rest," commented Dean when they were alone.

"I want that booth searched thoroughly," said Hatton. "It offers the only apparent place in the balcony where a gun could be fired under cover. How is it situated?"

"Near the centre. We have no built-in booth in this house. We never ran pictures until last year. To get a booth cheaply and quickly we just jerked out a number of seats in the centre of the balcony and built the booth on seat tiers."

Hatton ordered Detective Kennedy to search the booth, then asked Dean:

"Have any of your people ever been in trouble?"

"Nothing serious," he answered. "Some showmen have insinuated that I'm an easy mark."

"How?"

"For letting my help get away with things. Two of those ushers you questioned have been discharged for begging tips, and were taken back. They are good workers. Fred Gaines, my watchman, likes hooch and cards too well, but he's always on the job. Then there's Jacks, that operator. His family's pretty rotten. Two or three of the brothers have done time. This one has a temper, but he works steady and behaves himself."

"All small stuff," said Hatton. "Any one with a real original record?"

Dean shook his head. Then for an instant he seemed about to change his mind. "There was—but that's—no, no, there isn't," he finished jerkily.

"I'm going to the hospital," Hatton said. At the door he ran into Kennedy.

"Not a thing in that booth that shouldn't be there," said the assisting detective. "I searched it from top to bottom."

"Look the house over the moment the last person is out, Dean," said Hatton. "I'll be back soon."

Outside he got a taxi which honked its way through Broadway traffic to an upper floor of the City Hospital, where a house physician met him.

"Whether she lives depends largely upon the next hour or two," said the doctor. "There's a chance, but we're making no predictions. An inch or two higher and she'd have been killed instantly."

"The bullet——"

"I've removed it," said the doctor. "Step this way."

Hatton examined the small, elongated bit of lead. His lips parted slightly as he recognized its calibre. "A .22-long," he said. "The same sized bullet used by Captain Bothwell. This may let out McDermott, a gunman we picked up in the house. He had a larger bore gun."

"Do you wish to see Lathrop, who was with the girl?"

Hatton nodded thoughtfully and followed the physician. He found Allan Lathrop, a handsome youth of an extremely emotional

type. The young man told his story. Just previous to his meeting with Nan Redding, he said, the girl had been acquainted with an actor who was infatuated with her. On this acquaintance Lathrop blamed the evening's disaster.

"What was this man's name?" Hatton asked.

"He told Miss Redding it was McCormick, but she had reason to believe this was not true. Her mother objected seriously to him. They moved to avoid him. She hadn't seen him in months—that is, so far as I knew."

"Can you describe him?"

"I never saw him. Miss Redding said he was tall and dark. Mrs. Redding knows him. She's out of town, but I've wired for her. She'll be here before morning, I think."

"Good!" said Hatton. "I'll ask you, Mr. Lathrop, to remain here with this officer. When there's a definite change in Miss Redding's condition, or when her mother arrives, telephone me at Mr. Dean's office."

Before he returned to the theatre Hatton went to police headquarters. There he reported the case and had several detectives started investigating the pasts of a number of people. Then he went to the theatre. In the outer office, surrounded by police, he found all the house employees who had been grilled.

"Not a clue," said the manager. "The detectives and I went over the place from top to bottom. We even counted the bullets. They were three short of Captain Bothwell's estimate. But there were lead splinters on the stage. How about Bothwell and these house people? Finished with them?"

Dean thought a moment. "Bothwell will be held at headquarters," he said. "These others——" He stopped as if perplexed. Then, after a moment's thought, he went on: "Dean," we'll go into the outer office. I'll tell you that Miss Redding is in a serious condition, probably will die. I'll say the police can't do anything more here until morning. We'll leave. Kennedy will take Bothwell to headquarters. You let your people go. I'll come back in ten minutes by the side door, and see if anything happens while we are supposed to be away."

The program was carried out as Hatton prescribed. Ten minutes later Kennedy was on his way to the police station with Bothwell and Hatton was readmitted by Dean through a side door.

"What's on your mind?" asked the manager.

"I'd like to come in here later tonight. Have you a key?"

"You can take mine. But wait! I may want it early myself. Zinn has one. I'll give you his."

Dean pressed a buzzer. Ted Zinn, a large, rather dark young man, dressed with care and possessed of a sleek air, responded. Dean introduced him, and said: "Ted, would you mind loaning me your house keys?"

"Surely," said the assistant manager, and he fished in his pockets without finding them and withdrew.

He returned in a moment, a disturbed look upon his face, saying: "I—I don't seem to find them, Mr. Dean."

"Where did you leave them?"

"In my desk drawer."

"Was it locked?"

"It should have been. Wait, I'll look again."

Further search did not reveal the keys. Zinn, with apologies, returned to his office and Dean dropped into his chair with a trace of irritation. Slowly he shook his head. "I wonder, Hatton," he said, "if it pays after all?"

"If what pays?"

"Giving a chance to these chaps who—who have slipped."

"You mean——"

"Zinn. He should have kept those keys in his pocket. His office is open to the entire house staff. They can walk in one door and out the other. Zinn's absent-minded. Thinks a little too much of the girls, I'm afraid.

"He slipped, you say?"

"I thought of mentioning it, but passed it up. It really could have no connection. Some months ago he got into trouble over a girl. Knocked a fellow out. I had a deuce

of a time to save him from jail. And he repays me with this sort of carelessness."

Hatton was silent. Then he said: "Dean, let's have another of those 'farewell appearances' of which you theatrical men are so fond—this time for the benefit of Mr. Zinn?"

They were approaching Zinn's office when a large man with a bushy mustache and very small eyes came down the corridor. With one hand he was trying doors. In the other swung a heavy club. "Just coming to see you, Mr. Dean," he said. "I heard about the shooting. Are you leaving?"

"This is Fred Gaines, my night watchman, Detective Hatton," introduced Dean. "Am I leaving? Why——"

The quick eyes of Hatton noted that the door to Zinn's office was opening. He answered swiftly for the manager: "Yes, Mr. Dean is leaving now. There's nothing more the police can do until morning."

The detective gave the manager a significant look. The latter, taking the tip, turned to Zinn, who was coming from his office. "Forget about those keys, Ted," he said. "We'll find them tomorrow. Come, we're going."

Two blocks away, apparently heading for home, the detective and the manager took leave of Zinn. But they doubled back, and ten minutes later found them at a table in an obscure Eighth avenue restaurant.

"I'd like to have tipped off Gaines, if you insist on going back there tonight," Dean was saying. "But with Zinn standing there——"

"We'll take a chance on running into Gaines," said Hatton. "I'm not stuck on making a confidant of a man who has as much liquor on his breath as that bird had. Believe me, Dean, with all the off-color characters you've got around you, you make a man work overtime trying to dope them. If you take my tip, you'll clean house."

"They've got to work somewhere," said Dean, mercifully. "So far we've nothing crooked on them, at that."

"So far," said Hatton significantly; "but listen, brother, the night's not over. Just a moment until I call headquarters." He came back from his telephone call with a strange smile upon his face. While they ate he assumed a mood of reticence from which the manager guessed things were moving toward some definite solution.

They approached a small, little-used door at the rear of the Temple Theatre. Dean unlocked it. They removed their shoes and softly entered. Slowly and stealthily they crossed the stage. Then Dean led the way through another small door and they skirted the entrances to the boxes. The soft, thick carpet of the auditorium aisle deadened their tread.

They came where the side aisle joined the foyer. A step and a flash of light above caught their attention. "What's that?" Dean whispered.

"Maybe——" Hatton was whispering back. "Maybe——"

His whisper died. Hardly ten feet away the doors between the foyer and the lobby swished. The detective drew the manager back into the aisle and both crouched. But this moving figure had no light. It seemed to stand still a moment, then move toward the stairway leading upward.

After a moment Hatton followed. Reaching the bottom of the stairs, he could hear no more sounds, and guessed that the unknown had gone up. Slowly and carefully the two figures followed. They halted at the landing, then went on, merely taking a chance that the unknown had moved on ahead of them.

Dean led the way as they came to the balcony. They felt their way up a short stairway. At the top they sensed the great void between them and the ceiling. Instantly they listened. Then softly, at a point on their left where another short stairs led into the balcony, they heard steps.

Back of them somewhere in the dark the telephone began to ring. Dean nervously grasped Hatton's arm. That other figure there at the top of the other stairs scraped a foot nervously, too. Far below on the stage some one bumped into something and there was a muffled exclamation. "They're everywhere!" whispered Dean softly.

Hatton drew his companion back into the stairway. Far below, on the stage, some one was flashing a light over the house. At

the same instant there was a sound from the other stairway as if some one had slipped. The flashlight on the stage seemed to be trying to find the disturbance. The two men in the darkness heard quick steps approaching.

They held their ground, clinging to the side of the stairway. The steps were almost upon them. Then, suddenly, the unseen man swerved and took an upward course through the balcony. The light on the stage faded. Heavy steps down there seemed to be retreating. Hatton, holding to Dean, for a moment was at a loss. Then he whispered: "You stick here. Stop anybody that comes with a light and a gun. I'll cover the other stairway."

As both men stood at the foot of the stairways, their flashlights and revolvers ready, there was an odd rasping sound above. It was followed by quick, racing steps. Hatton, realizing there must be a dozen means of egress from the balcony, gripped his gun, ready to fly in any direction. Suddenly, in a stairway back and to the left of him, came the sound of descending feet.

"Quick, Dean!" he whispered through the darkness. Advancing half a dozen steps, he barred the way. Now the footsteps were close. Now they were upon him. Leveling his gun at the spot where the sounds seemed to be, he pressed the button of his flash—a second too late. For the man, rushing upon him precipitantly, instead of being illuminated by the flash and held back by the gun, plunged headlong against him.

The detective's flashlight was knocked to the floor. Realizing the futility and danger of firing into the dark, he thrust his gun into his pocket and, with a yell to Dean for light, plunged after the escaping man. Twice he bumped into walls. Then, of a sudden, he came upon a man in the dark—a man softly and cautiously trying to tiptoe out of danger.

There was a brief encounter as Dean's light played upon the struggling pair. Then Hatton pinned his adversary against the wall. His shoulders tightly pressed back, a wild-eyed, thin-lipped young man squinted at them defiantly.

"Gorman Jacks!" cried Dean.

"Jacks, your motion picture operator," said Hatton. "There's a rifle on the floor. He dropped it when he bumped into me."

Dean picked up a .22 calibre rifle. "You mean," he gasped, "you mean Jacks shot the girl?"

Hatton nodded.

"But—but what had he against her?"

"He wasn't shooting at her. He was aiming at Pierce Seymour, who sat next—and his aim was bad."

"But why——"

"Mr. Seymour once prosecuted Jacks's brother for embezzlement, he told me. When Jacks heard his sentence to prison he had a fit of rage. He threatened Mr. Seymour, who was in the court-room.

"But we all thought the guilty man had been shooting at the girl."

"At least one of us, Dean, reflected that everybody doesn't shoot as straight as Captain Bothwell, and tried another hypothesis. Stick your hand in Jacks's pocket, Dean. What do you find?"

"Zinn's keys," said the manager. "Guess Zinn had nothing to do with it, after all. But why did Jacks come back here tonight?"

"He bit on my nothing-doing-until-morning bait. He wanted to get that gun, fearing it would be found tomorrow."

"But where was it hid?"

"Let's look."

Beside the picture booth a piece of wood used to make the both sit level had been displaced. It revealed a cavity where the would-be murderer had hidden the rifle under cover of the balcony's darkness and the panic in the house. "Kennedy looked in, but not under the booth," said Hatton briefly.

Behind them some one puffed up the stairs. It was Fred Gaines, the night watchman. He turned his flash upon them. "So you were the other one we heard, Gaines," said Dean. "There goes that telephone again. Wait."

"It's the hospital, Hatton," he cried a moment later. "They say the girl will recover."

The Dorothy Perkins Rose

By DOROTHY STOTE

CHAPTER ONE

SACKVILLE was quite excited as he walked down Fifth avenue towards his apartment on Fifty-first street.

One of the men in the house at which he had been dining was the unconscious cause of Sackville's excitement—the entirely innocent and unsuspecting cause. He had just returned from a trip abroad, and was recounting his experiences as they sat around the candle-lighted mahogany table after dinner. There were six of them, all dinner-coated, and smoking their host's discriminately selected cigars.

"Lisbon," the man said, "has more jewelry stores than any city I have ever seen. Not cheap, tawdry little places one encounters all over Spain, but the exclusive, smart shops, literally loaded with diamonds and sapphires. I was getting twenty-six *escudos* to the dollar at the exchange, and the *escudo* used to be worth around twenty or twenty-five cents!"

The jewelry shops were literally loaded with diamonds and sapphires! Exchange was low! Sackville's dark eyes glistened.

"Damn it!" he muttered.

This casual bit of information seemed like the direct and wholly engaging hand of Fate. Only, there was the affair of the Cabachon sapphires bought in Paris. If only he had handled the job directly! But he no longer enjoyed the advantage of being hitherto unknown. The police were beginning to take his activities as a smuggler into account. He had become by far too conspicuous a figure in their reckonings, even so much as to contemplate a trip abroad.

And there was that smart detective—he'd been doing some astounding work, Sackville had heard. What was his name? Carston Rowe—that was it.

He might have kept to his plans of caution had it not been for a little adventure that happened to him about two weeks later. The rain, which had been almost continuous ever since the dinner party, had temporarily abated, and Sackville, depressed by the weather, and restless through his enforced idleness, left his apartment and started for a walk along Fifth avenue. It was about eleven o'clock at night and few people were abroad. He glanced casually at a man hurrying along before him, but, absorbed by his thoughts, he paid no further attention to the stranger.

At Fifty-second street the crosstown traffic was unusually heavy, and deflected theatre traffic. Sackville paused. But the hastening stranger was apparently not willing to be held up. Seeing what appeared to be an opening between two taxicabs, he darted forward. He slipped, threw out his arms in a vain effort to save himself, and fell before the second taxi, which had unexpectedly spurted forward. With an exclamation Sackville grabbed at the bewildered man and pulled him back just as the motor auto crossed the place where he had lain.

"My dear fellow," said Sackville irritably, "doesn't mere living in New York offer sufficient difficulties without your adding to them by trying to buck traffic?"

The stranger was now on his feet, and was instinctively attempting to brush off some of the disfiguring mud from his clothes.

"I am extremely grateful to you," he replied. "That was a pretty close shave. You just about saved me from a bad accident."

At sight of the man's full face Sackville looked at him more intently. He noticed

the thin, pointed features, the black hair and eyes, the rather sallow complexion. His irritation gave place to incredulous wonder. Yes, the man's height was practically the same as his own. There was, too, the same bored droop to the narrow shoulders.

"I don't know how to thank you," the man went on earnestly.

"Would you really," returned Sackville, the opportunist, as he regarded the man speculatively, "care to show your appreciation of my slight service in some tangible form?"

The man looked at Sackville with curiosity.

"Because, if you are in earnest," Sackville continued, "I'd like to make a sporting and an unusual proposition."

"And your proposition is?" prompted the man.

"That you do me the kindness to make my apartment your home for one month. I am not," he hastened to add, "in the habit of exacting evidences of gratitude for small services I am able to render passing strangers, but it so happens—— Look at me," he demanded suddenly. "Does it not strike you that our resemblance to each other is most extraordinary?"

Under the street light the two men paused, the one in a dark suit, muddy, traces of dirt still on his cheek, his collar hopelessly soiled; the other in tweeds, gray felt hat, and light overcoat buttoned close at the neck as protection against the rain. Dissimilar as was their clothing, their physical characteristics were almost identical, even to the rather drooping eyelids that gave an arrogant expression to the narrow eyes.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the man, "I believe you're my double."

"You'll find my apartment quite comfortable, my collection of antques is not bad.

"Your suggestion," replied the stranger, "is certainly remarkable, Mr.——"

"My name is Pierre Sackville. And yours?"

The man hesitated an instant.

"Watson," he replied with a curious smile. "Holmes Watson, and I'd be delighted to avail myself of your hospitality, as I am homeless, and—broke."

CHAPTER TWO

IT had seemed advisable to take a French line steamer leaving for Cherbourg and stopping at Vigo, Spain, where Sackville could disembark unobtrusively and go by train to Lisbon, Portugal. It was slower,

Sackville found the accommodations at the modest Hotel Europa most modern, although the furniture in his sitting-room and bed-room looked like a bad dream.

He left his hotel and went down to the Place de Dom Pedro, then made a leisurely trip along the crowded Rua Aurea, and systematically examined the smart, exclusive-looking jewelry shops which the man at the dinner in New York had so truly said were literally loaded with diamonds and sapphires. And he was to get twenty-eight *escudos* to the dollar!

His purchases, extending over three days, were made discriminatingly, and his transactions, under an assumed name, were conducted as unobtrusively as possible. Whenever it was feasible he bought unset stones.

The perfection of the stones made his return trip on the *Narengeria* less boring. Sackville disliked ocean travel. Alone in his stateroom he fingered the jewels lovingly. It was his passion for precious stones that had gradually led him into the smuggling game.

Impulse had led him into this new venture, but the instinctive caution that hitherto kept his activities from being no more than suspected by the police now directed his next step. He took Sophie Calvert into his confidence.

His meeting with Mrs. Calvert on the steamship had at first appeared a mere relief from his boredom. He had known her for a number of years. What was more important, he was the sole possessor of the secret of Mrs. Calvert's complicity in an affair of questionable character. It was a matter which, if strategically disclosed, could lead to embarrassing complications for Mrs. Calvert.

"I believe," suggested Sackville pointedly, after he had made his decision, "that we know each other sufficiently to expect certain considerations between us?"

Mrs. Calvert, wincing at his implication, assented hastily.

"You will make your return trip on this boat," he concluded when he had outlined his plan to her. "You will go direct to Tony Picardo, once you are through the customs, and in exchange for your work Mr. Picardo will give you the sum agreed upon. It is all quite clear?"

"Yes, indeed!"

Mrs. Calvert's assurance was convincing.

"Then," said Sackville regretfully, "it might be wiser if we were not seen together any more."

But when Sackville encountered the customs inspectors in New York he had cause to congratulate himself upon the instinct that had led him to engage the coöperation of Mrs. Calvert, and to question himself uneasily concerning the impregnable structure of his so carefully thought-out plan. The examination of his luggage was exhaustive; even his person was submitted to a minute search. Where was the flaw? Had the fellow Watson failed to carry out his agreement, or had the impersonation been detected? Or—or—what?

Sackville was unable to ascertain. Apparently Watson had fulfilled his contract. Later Sackville questioned him as closely as he dared. But that he, Sackville, was now under close surveillance there was no doubt. Let them watch him, and be damned. He had completed his task and the plan would now work out almost automatically.

It was not easy to wait patiently, however. Nor did the fact that every time he went out he was followed by a detective add to Sackville's peace of mind. Well, anyhow, it wouldn't be long before the little deal was finished up, and the money deposited in his bank. Then he really would keep out of crooked games for a while.

He deported himself carefully. Sophie was to have taken the first steamer for Europe on which she could engage passage after her arrival in New York. She would then take passage in Paris on the *Narengeria* and come back to New York. That vessel always sailed for the States on a Saturday, and with any kind of weather docked on the following Friday, for it was a fast boat. This meant he should hear from Picardo some time Friday afternoon, the twenty-second.

When the day finally arrived, Sackville waited impatiently for Picardo's message. It did not come until almost five o'clock. He listened with eagerness to Picardo's guarded telephone report.

"I have your flowers," Picardo said laconically. And following their usual code he named a number and variety of flowers, each one of which pertained to the size, quality and quantity of the stones Sackville had bought in Lisbon.

"There is one you have forgotten," Sackville prompted. "A Dorothy Perkins rose."

"There are no Dorothy Perkins roses," Picardo asserted quite positively.

"But you must be mistaken," exclaimed Sackville in alarm. "The square sapphire—it was the prize stone of the lot!"

"There are no Dorothy Perkins roses," repeated Picardo vehemently.

Sackville put down the phone in consternation. The square sapphire missing! It would have sold for a cool twelve thousand.

Forgetting all caution, he took a taxi and hurried to the Hotel Gloria, where he knew Sophie would be stopping. As she came to the lobby to meet him he looked at her sharply.

"What have you done with it?" he demanded harshly.

"With what?" she asked with a puzzled glance.

She led him to a davenport in the corner of the lounge, and he sat down impatiently.

"With the square sapphire," he snapped. "Where is it?"

Sophie Calvert looked about uneasily. If they should be overheard!

"I didn't see it," she answered. "I brought everything you gave me to Picardo."

"You lie!" cried Sackville.

Mrs. Calvert arose and looked down

scornfully at the furious man on the davenport.

"Pierre," she said slowly, "we're quits now, you know. You couldn't very well say anything about me now, could you? But I could match your story about me with one of my own about you. I tell you there was no square sapphire—or at least if there was, I didn't see it, and I'll thank you not to call me a liar."

She clenched her hands suddenly, and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Get out of here," she added in a voice of suppressed anger. "You were a fool to come. Do you think I'd steal from you?"

She turned and left him, and in confusion he watched her walk to the elevator and enter it.

With a feeling of shame he walked out of the hotel.

For days thoughts of the sapphire obsessed him. It called to him, lured him with a siren song.

The longer Sackville thought about it, the stronger became his desire to go abroad once more. The sapphire had driven all caution from his mind and robbed him of his perspective. He must have that stone! And so at length he took passage again for Europe. This time he went direct to Paris, planning to return as soon as he could get his former stateroom on the *Narengeria*.

When at length he boarded the *Narengeria* and entered his room, he locked his door with trembling hand and looked searchingly about the little cabin. Quickly he knelt by the berth and examined the white wooden wall under the bed.

With a sharp knife he began carefully working at a place in the wall three inches from the foot of his bed and six inches from the floor. Suddenly a square piece of the wall fell to the floor, a piece about the size of a woman's handkerchief. He inserted nervous fingers into the aperture disclosed. For a moment his face blanched. The sapphire was not there!

With great care, this time, he investigated the space in the wall. This time his search was rewarded. His fingers came in contact with tissue-paper lying in the far corner well down in the hole. Sackville drew out the square sapphire from its hiding-place and, removing the tissue-paper, polished the gem with a small piece of chamois. Then he examined it hungrily, held it against his cheek, and ran his long, sensitive fingers over its surface.

He experienced no feeling of uneasiness when once more he encountered a customs official at the New York dock. The government spies had nothing on him. There should be no minute inspection this time. His every movement in Paris had been quite open and aboveboard. Let them search him, anyhow, if they liked. While the concealment of a number of stones from an experienced official who already suspected him was not easy, it was not a difficult matter to secure the one square sapphire to the palm of his right hand by means of strips of adhesive tape. Let them search his luggage. And his person, if they liked.

Nevertheless, when he was led in to the little office on the dock his face became a trifle tense and the drooping eyelids were a little heavier. The strain of the past weeks was beginning to tell, and Sackville wished that he could have been spared this ordeal. He clenched his right hand nervously, and felt the reassuring hardness of the sapphire in his palm.

"Just a few minutes," he thought, "and it will be over. Then I will lay low for a long time. I've got it. It's mine, and they'll never take it away from me."

His clothes, his shoes, his hat—all were subjected to the most detailed search. Sackville stood by, his mouth tense. About his temples there was that faint movement, regular, quick, almost like the beating of a pulse.

Would they never finish with him!

At length the customs officials reluctantly were ready to let him go. They could find nothing.

Sackville picked up his bag with his left hand and turned to leave. Free! And the sapphire secure in his right palm! It had been a bit of a strain, but it was worth it.

He reached the door of the office. Suddenly it was opened from the outside. A man entered—a tall man, with thin, pointed

features, with drooping lids over narrow eyes, with shoulders that curved in a bored line. He regarded Sackville with a humorous, rather apologetic smile.

"Watson!" Sackville exclaimed in surprise.

Taken off his guard by this unexpected meeting, Sackville stretched out his hand. The next instant, regretting his impulse, he withdrew it. What was Watson doing there?

But his movement had been too late. Watson put out his hand and grasped Sackville's in his own. The contact of the two palms was fatal. Sackville tried to pull his hand away, but Watson held it in a sudden strong grip.

"A sore hand, Mr. Sackville?" he said smoothly. "Perhaps you will permit me to examine it. It feels lumpy."

"You showed a certain amount of ingenuity," he went on as he began deftly stripping off the adhesive tape from Sackville's palm. "It never occurred to us in the beginning that Mrs. Calvert was any but a chance acquaintance made on your return trip from Portugal. But where you made your mistake was in going to her hotel after she returned with the jewels."

Sackville watched the man as he pulled off a strip of the tape.

"What I couldn't understand at first," Watson went on, "was why you took the trouble to hide the stones in your stateroom and send Mrs. Calvert clear back to Europe and then over here again to get them from your stateroom. But after thinking the matter over, I realized you had to arrange with your fence to meet her here and get them from her. The sudden demand for stateroom B189 proved of course where you had hidden them—not a bad idea."

Watson removed the last piece of adhesive tape and took off the tissue-paper from the sapphire.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "the Dorothy Perkins Rose! A good specimen, too. Let me congratulate you on your flawless taste."

He commenced carefully wrapping the stone in its tissue-paper.

"It was difficult to bribe your valet into reporting all your telephone conversations," Watson went on, "but we finally scared him into it. That is how I know your poetical name for this excellent sapphire. I think that clears up all the points in your mind?"

Sackville, who had been listening to the man like one in a dream, now suddenly found his voice.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded huskily.

Watson smiled, and spread his hands in a deprecatory gesture.

"Carston Rowe."

Sackville, the opportunist, threw up his hands in despair. He was caught at last with the goods on him!

ROBBING THE POSTMASTER

A MASKED holdup man struck Joseph La Monte, a boss plasterer, of the Bronx, several blows with a revolver recently as he was about to pay off twenty-five plasterers working in a building at 587 East 169th street, and got away with a bag containing $1,500.

La Monte had just left the Bronx National Bank, at 149th street and Third avenue, and was passing through a corridor on the top floor of the five-story building, where his men were at work, when the bandit came up behind him and attacked him with the weapon. As workmen, attracted by La Monte's cries, ran toward him, the bandit slipped down the stairs and out of the building.

Among those who hurried to the building at word of the holdup were John E. McGeehan, District Attorney of the Bronx, and police of the Bathgate and Morrisania police stations. A thorough search was made, even in a church next door, but the bandits were not found.

The Purple Dragon Inn

By VERA CUMMING VIELE

PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE

MY brother, who lives in Rochester, sent his son Jerry to me and he has been a great help in my detective work. He has aided me in several intricate cases, and among them one in which the wife stole her own pearls. Jerry was as deeply puzzled as I was when I put the facts of the Parrish case before him.

We started out early in the morning for New Jersey to interview Mrs. Parrish, as we had learned that she lived in Maplewood. On the way to the depot we stopped at Parrish's office. I wanted to see his stenographer and find out all she knew about the murdered man.

Miss Thompson was a pretty young woman, very dark-complexioned and seemed to be a very efficient business woman.

She said she had been with Parrish about two years, but had never seen his wife. After considerable questioning, she gave me the information that there were two women with deep, throaty voices, who frequently called her employer on the phone.

One of them was his wife, she thought, and the other a business acquaintance. She never heard him mention any name when he conversed with either of them. I asked if she knew he had a sweetheart.

"He told me once," she replied, "that he had a good pal. She was learning to cut people up scientifically. Some day she hoped to be a full-fledged doctor."

"He had been drinking the day he confided in me," Miss Thompson said, "or he would not have told me about his lady friend."

This sounded like another clue, as the person who struck the blow that killed certainly seemed to know anatomy.

"Will you tell me the name of this pal of his who was studying medicine?" I asked.

"I once heard him call her Inez. He had met her on a steamer returning from Brazil on one of his trips. She was a Brazilian."

I told Jerry to get a couple of my men who were experts at finding people, give them this information and have a search made at the medical schools and colleges for the woman in the case.

Then I started for New Jersey to interview the widow of the murdered man.

When I arrived at the home of Mrs. Parrish I found she resided in a very fine house, in the style of an English manor.

It set back in the grounds some distance from the street and the front lawn was well kept.

A trim maid, who answered the door, told me that Mrs. Parrish was not at home, and when I persisted she explained that her mistress had gone away the day before, about five o'clock in the afternoon, to New York, to keep a dinner engagement, and had not yet returned.

When I asked where the dinner engagement was held she replied the Hotel Ritz, as Mrs. Parrish had said she had to get to the Ritz by half-past six o'clock.

Telling the maid that I would return later in the day, I walked down the street, wondering whether this New York call had any connection with the murder of Parrish.

I had traversed about two blocks from the house when I met a taxicab coming toward me with a woman in it wearing a

long black fur coat and with a white veil over a small hat.

I was just thinking of that description given me by the waiter and chauffeur when I saw this lady. I turned to gaze after the cab.

It stopped in front of the Parrish house, and I saw a small woman alight and enter the house. She carried a small black bag. I had never thought for a moment of Mrs. Parrish being connected with the crime, but her going to the Ritz Hotel the night before had given me a slight shock.

Of course, the simplest solution of the whole thing was that the wronged wife committed the murder. She might have been the lady who accompanied Parrish to the Purple Dragon Inn the night before.

Tim Burns, the chauffeur, said he had never seen Mrs. Parrish, nor had he heard Mr. Parrish address his lady companion by name while driving to the Purple Dragon Inn.

Retracing my steps to the house I had just left, I again rang the bell and told the maid I wished to see Mrs. Parrish.

She admitted me.

This did not seem the home of a woman who would plunge a knife into her husband's back. A moment later I got a distinct thrill by hearing a low throaty voice, with a foreign accent, asking what my business was with Mrs. Parrish. I glanced up as she swept into the room.

The lady was a beautiful dark type, rather stout and slim, with wonderful dark eyes and hair.

I replied that if she would be seated a moment I should like to ask a few questions about her late husband. She put her hand up to her head as if to ward off a blow, and repeated in her low throaty voice:

"*Late* husband?"

"Did you not know that Mr. Parrish was murdered last night at the Purple Dragon Inn?" I asked.

"Oh, he is dead, then?" she screamed, and she fainted at my feet.

The maid ran into the room. We put Mrs. Parrish on the davenport and tried to restore her to consciousness, but without any success.

The maid then telephoned a nearby doctor, who happened to be in. He came right over.

He gave orders for no one to disturb her under any circumstances. He added hers was a highly strung temperament of the emotional and excitable type.

I was compelled to wait for Mrs. Parrish to recover enough to be questioned. Her actions had been so suspicious that I thought she should be guarded.

I then called up my nephew, Jerry, whom I had left in New York, and told him to come over to Maplewood as fast as he could, to relieve me. I meant to leave him on guard over Mrs. Parrish until she was able to explain her absence of the night before during the time her husband was murdered.

I met Jerry at the station, gave him instructions, and told him to be sure to find the black bag that Mrs. Parrish was carrying when she came home in the taxi.

"She may be the criminal," I explained.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOR the next day or two I was very busy digging up facts about the life of Parrish and following clues leading in several directions. Jerry phoned that Mrs. Parrish had brain fever, and added that Doctor Pierce had said it would be some time before she would be in a condition to be questioned.

A week later Jerry called me on the telephone and was very much excited. He said he had just found the small black bag in Mrs. Parrish's clothes-closet, and added the startling fact that the bag contained an embroidered mandarin-coat of gray silk, with large purple dragons on it. There was also a wig of short black hair in the bag.

I gave Jerry instructions to get a room and stay on the job until Mrs. Parrish was well enough to be taken into custody, as that seemed the end of the trail of the Purple Dragon Inn mystery.

I rather prided myself on being a good reader of character, and I was ready to

wager that Mrs. Parrish did not kill her husband, even if the evidence did point her way.

It seemed as if this would be one of those unsolved mysteries the newspapers sometimes tell about.

My brain kept reviewing the whole puzzling case. I wondered how Mrs. Parrish could have known about the secret exit through the statue, but could not find any solution of the mystery that satisfied me.

It was peculiar that the inn was owned by a wealthy young man from Buenos Aires and Mrs. Parrish had also come from the same city.

Finally I cabled to South America for information about Rosita Parrish before her marriage.

News finally reached me that the owner of the Purple Dragon Inn, Senor José Pasquale, and Rosita Martinez Parrish had been born on neighboring estates there, and were boy and girl sweethearts.

Both families were wealthy and prominent, and after Rosita married Jack Parrish and left for New York Senor Pasquale soon followed his sweetheart to this city.

I next decided to run out to the Purple Dragon Inn, look the place over and make some further inquiries about the owner.

Le Deiur received me in his private office and told me he would answer any questions he could about his employer. Senor José Pasquale was a wealthy young man, he said, who, when he arrived from South America, found that time hung heavily on his hands. He took a long trip to Japan and China, and all through the Orient. Those countries had always held a fascination for him.

He came back to New York determined to find a pretty spot in the country near the metropolis and have a country estate with a house furnished in Oriental style. He had bought a quantity of house furnishings on his travels in China.

An old farm-house was secured, the interior changed, and electric lights installed. He spent months with decorators and workmen overseeing all the details of making what is now the Purple Dragon Inn.

Before the place was finished he decided it was too lonesome there for a single man, so he decided to make a luxurious inn of it and charge prices that would only cater to the rich, who had money enough to squander on food in gorgeous surroundings.

This gave him an opportunity to indulge his taste for Chinese art, at the same time bring in some revenue.

The Purple Dragon Inn was a financial success from the start. Le Deiur, the manager, described the owner of the inn as a very fastidious young man in the early thirties, and handsome.

He was medium height, had a clear olive skin, with the darkest shade of brown hair, black eyes and very even, white teeth.

"Was he a friend of Mr. Parrish?" I asked.

"No, the owner had never seen Mr. Parrish that he remembered.

When I asked for the present address of the owner of the inn where a cable might reach him in Europe, I was told he received his mail at his brother's house in Paris. Anything sent there would be forwarded to him, as he was traveling most of the time.

I sent a cable and tried to get in touch with him, so our agent in France could make him explain a few things.

No reply came back. I then cabled his brother and asked if he had José's address.

His brother answered: "Purple Dragon Inn."

So there I was in another blind alley.

Despite my suspicion, there were many links in the chain of evidence to be woven around Mrs. Parrish before she could be indicted for her husband's murder. And there were many things I wanted to clear up in my own mind about her movements on the night of April 1st, when Jack Parrish was killed.

I decided to stop at the Ritz Hotel on my way back to the city and speak to the house detective about the people concerned in this case.

CHAPTER FIVE

AT the Ritz that evening I sought the house detective, James White, and learned many facts that surprised me and

made the mystery deeper. In reply to my question of his acquaintance with Jack Parrish or his wife, the detective replied that he knew both quite well, and admired Mrs. Parrish a great deal. Then he added:

"When they were first married I happened to do a slight favor for Mrs. Parrish which her husband rewarded me handsomely for, and she never forgot it."

"Do you remember seeing Mrs. Parrish or her husband lately?"

"I saw the lady in question the first night in April in this hotel."

"How do you remember the date so well, Jim?" I asked him.

"Well, you see, Mr. Creton, there was an April Fool masque ball here given by the South American Society, and I saw Mrs. Parrish about six o'clock in the lobby, with her street clothes on, waiting for some one, I guess."

"When did you see her again?" I asked.

"About midnight."

He explained that he was detailed to watch the guests' wraps and furs and to keep his eyes on the jewels the masqueraders were wearing in the private ballroom on an upper floor.

While standing near an exit, he said a lady came up to him and said "Good-evening, Mr. White," and then took off a purple satin mask. It was Mrs. Parrish.

"How was she dressed, Jim?" I asked.

"Well, Mr. Creton, she had a queer-looking thing like the rich Chinese wear. It was a loose coat made of gray silk, and had a large purple dragon embroidered on it front and back. She also had on a wig of black hair, and looked like a man.

This was news with a vengeance, I thought, and I questioned him further as to her mental state, if she appeared to be nervous, or if she were excited at all.

"Now that you speak of it," he answered, "she acted as if she was worried over something, and was rather nervous, but I thought it was the excitement of the ball."

"Could Mrs. Parrish have gone to the Purple Dragon Inn and return in the interval between the time you first saw her and the time when you noticed her in the mandarin coat?"

The detective thought a moment and nodded.

"She had plenty of time, but you do not believe that lady is guilty of a murder, do you?"

"I'll tell you what I figured the trouble was with Mrs. Parrish," was my reply. "She had probably seen her husband earlier in the evening with another woman, and it had upset her. It may have driven her into a blind fury of jealousy and caused her to stab her husband."

"Take my word, Mr. Creton," White informed me earnestly, "Mrs. Parrish is innocent of that crime."

CHAPTER SIX

THAT evening I arrived at Jerry's rooming place, near the Parrish home. He informed me that Mrs. Parrish was slowly recovering. He had seen her, without being detected.

We strolled past the house where the suspected lady lived and noticed a small, delicate-looking man come out the kitchen door. He looked like a Spaniard. The man began to rake the back yard.

"Come with me, Jerry," I whispered; "that fellow fits the description of the discharged waiter, Fredrico Mattus."

"I have learned that he once worked for Rosita's father, Senor Martinez, in Buenos Aires," said Jerry as we moved away. "When he came to New York he had gone to ask Mrs. Parrish for work, and as she had none to offer she sent him to their neighbor's son at Purple Dragon Inn."

Jerry and I approached Mattus and asked if he hadn't worked at the inn as a waiter. He admitted it and told us of his quarrel with the manager.

"Of course I took the mandarin coat with me," he declared angrily. "Why shouldn't I? They owed me money enough to pay for the coat."

"What did you do when you left the inn?" asked Jerry.

"After being out of work some time I visited Mrs. Parrish to see if she could give me anything to do for my board and room until I found something better. While I was talking to her the maid butted in and I heard her telling the maid she did not know what to wear to the masque ball. I offered her the mandarin coat, which I had just had cleaned, and suggested she wear a wig so her most intimate friends would not recognize her. She laughed and accepted my offer, so I brought her the coat and suppose she wore it to the ball."

The South American showed his dog-like devotion to Rosita Parrish. He told us what an angel she was to take him in that night and feed him as he had no money and no place to go.

Mattus next proved by the housekeeper, Jane Ames, that he had been in the house all the evening of the night that Mr. Parrish was murdered.

Soon after this Jerry left for the Purple Dragon Inn.

I thought the owner might have returned from Europe by this time, as the papers had made a sensation of the inn and the murder of Jack Parrish.

On the road to the inn we passed a well-dressed man who we had noticed coming out of an old tumble-down barn.

He appeared to be about forty years of age, of foreign appearance, and was walking toward the inn.

When we arrived at the inn, Mr. Le Deiur, the manager, opened the door for us.

"You're to have another guest," I remarked, pointing to the man on the road.

"Guest?" he laughed. "Why, sir, that is our new gardener."

Jerry and I exchanged glances, but said nothing further about the man as we followed the manager inside, but I knew Jerry was thinking as I was, that the man did not look like a gardener.

The tables and chairs were now stacked and protected with white covers, and there was an air of gloom and chill in the place.

We went up the stairs to the room where Jack Parrish had met his fate and I opened the door. As soon as we entered I noticed footprints in the dust on the floor.

"What is this?" I asked Le Deiur; "has any one else a key to this room?"

He said "No" so emphatically that I could tell by his expression that he also was surprised at my question, and had not noticed the marks on the rug.

We dismissed Le Deiur so we could make our search for another exit besides the door and started our investigations as soon as his footsteps died away.

Jerry was attracted by the weird-looking electric-light fixtures and walked over to examine them. He stood fascinated in front of a big dragon fixture, and remarked that they were awful looking things, and that he would like to examine them closely.

"Go to it," I told him. "Give them as minute an inspection as you can."

I mounted a chair to examine the hole at the top of the room whence the ventilation came, so paid no attention to Jerry's ramblings.

"These dragons certainly have long tails, haven't they?" Jerry remarked, more to himself than to me, but I kept on examining the grating over the hole at the top of the wall without answering him.

"Now just look at this old fellow," he went on, and he started to measure the dragon from head to tail.

All at once he uttered a startled cry.

"Look out for the floor!"

I looked down to see what the trouble was, and gave a jump at the same time, for I saw an opening in the floor yawning at my feet.

The dragon in the rug was a cleverly concealed door; the button that opened this trap was at the end of the dragon's tail, and Jerry had pressed it.

"Look," he cried excitedly, "here is another exit from the death-room. Maybe it will explain the mystery of this murder of Parrish. Let us go down these steps and see if we can discover the murderess."

"Murderer, you mean," I snapped. "It was a man who killed Jack Parrish."

"But he was seen to enter the room with a woman, and Tim Burns said he drove a woman with Parrish to the inn that night," protested Jerry.

"Clever disguise, my dear chap," I told

him, "and part of a diabolical scheme. Funny, I never thought of the chandeliers being the key to the situation."

We descended the steps leading from the trap-door. They were very steep and it was as dark as pitch, but I had a flash-light with me, prepared for anything like this.

The stairs were short, and led into a long, narrow tunnel that must have been under the side yard.

"Just as I suspected," I told Jerry. "This tunnel leads back under the road we traveled this afternoon to that old abandoned barn."

"Then the stranger we saw coming out of it knows about this secret passage?"

"Exactly, Jerry; why shouldn't he know about it when he had it made? I've a hunch that gardener is Senor José Pasquale, the owner of the inn."

"Well, I'll be blowed," gasped Jerry in bewilderment.

We made our way ahead without any more conversation, as we were not sure we were not going to run into our man at any moment.

We certainly did not want him to know of our approach, and we couldn't tell when we might reach the end of this black tunnel.

Pretty soon we felt fresh air coming in gusts, and we suddenly strode into a luxurious room.

The place was well supplied with comforts such as easy-chairs, a desk, a good bed and several periodicals, cigars and wine-bottles.

Another luxury this subterranean room provided for the occupant was a large radio outfit of the superhetrodyne type.

"Now you see how Senor Pasquale is spending his European trip," I remarked dryly to Jerry. He nodded and I started toward a large clothes-closet at the side of the room.

It contained several suits of both male and female wearing apparel. There were men's shoes, and smaller ones for a lady.

Then I turned my attention to the desk, ransacked it and was rewarded by finding the evidence we were looking for.

In a lower drawer, on the left-hand side, lay a tightly folded package which contained a black evening dress.

In another drawer I found a string of very fine pearls.

The lower right-hand drawer of the desk contained a wig of short black hair, and that made the murderer's disguise complete, with the gloves I had found in the cellar in our hands.

While I was making a further search of the room Jerry climbed the stairs to find an outlet.

While he was exploring the upper regions I took two pairs of shoes out of the closet and found that they fitted the foot-prints in the dust on the floor of the room exactly. Upon my return to the subterranean room I found Jerry there. He had learned that the exit opened into the old barn, but the opening was cleverly concealed by an old broken carriage.

I outlined a plan to Jerry, by which we would keep our discovery a secret for a while, so we retraced our steps to the death chamber and closed the trap-door in the floor. The dragon took his place in the rug once more as an integral part of it. We hunted up Le Deiur, told him that we were going and were careful not to let him know that we had found the secret passageway. His expression read:

"I thought that was about all you would discover—nothing."

We drove to the village of Crescent, had our supper, and then went to the local police for a warrant for the arrest of Senor José Pasquale on suspicion.

The judge of the village was a little, wizened old man, who was engaged in playing cards with two of his old cronies when we called.

When he asked my business, and I stated that I wanted a warrant for the arrest of Senor José Pasquale, he acted as if he thought I was crazy.

"Why, man, he is in Europe," he replied.

I told him enough of my discovery to get the warrant, and cautioned him not to repeat it until we had returned with our prisoner.

He could not get it through his head that the inn owner and the woman who was with

Parrish, were one and the same person. On the way back to the inn I suggested to Jerry that we reconnoiter, steal to the back of the barn, and slip into the underground room unseen. It was dark when we arrived at the barn, and we moved the carriage, which hid the entrance to the stairs, very cautiously.

Everything seemed quite deserted. Softly we descended the stairs, intending to hide and surprise the culprit. The tables were turned, however, and we got the surprise.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AS we reached the last step and looked into the secret room we saw the lifeless body of Senor José Pasquale stretched out on the floor by the side of the beautiful antique desk.

On the table was a lengthy confession, which I eagerly read, and the gist of it was this:

Rosita Martinez and he were girl and boy sweethearts and were born on neighboring estates in South America.

He always considered that Rosita belonged to him and would marry him when they had reached the proper age.

Rosita loved José as a brother, but on his side it was all blind worship. Then Jack Parrish came into her life, and she loved him and married him while Jose was in Paris.

When Pasquale returned home, found his sweetheart married and gone to New York, he was almost frantic with disappointment and rage. He cursed Parrish for stealing his Rosita.

He could not content himself any longer in his old home, so he, too, went to New York to be near the woman he loved.

To occupy his time after coming to New York he went on a long trip to the Orient.

After staying away a year he came back to New York and bought the property, which he remodeled into the inn.

Rosita's marriage had been a happy one the first two years. Then Jack Parrish began to be seen with other women. Pasquale had seen him seated at a table in the Ritz hotel with a pretty young woman showing her every devotion. His blood seemed to boil at such an insult to Rosita.

He met his old playmate as she was getting into her car, and as she looked very unhappy he decided to have her husband watched.

The result of the investigation was so bad that he decided Parrish was a scoundrel. In his fury he swore that he would not permit Parrish to live and cause Rosita so much pain and unhappiness.

When he plotted to kill Parrish in secret, he had a room at the inn arranged with a trap-door and a tunnel connected with the barn. The bronze Buddha and automatic elevator inside of it was arranged to bring wines up from his private stock to serve big personal friends.

His next move was to meet Parrish, dressed as a woman, and impress him as a prospective purchaser of stocks.

Pasquale had always been very clever as a female impersonator. Masquerading this way he called on Parrish and asked his advice about buying a certain mining stock that Parrish had advertised.

The broker was only too willing to call at the Ritz and take the rich Miss Cortez out for a drive through the Park to talk over the investments.

After a few meetings, Miss Cortez hinted that it would be much nicer to have a talk in a private room while dining, and suggested that she knew of a wonderful place. Parrish needed no urging. He fell into Pasquale's plan without a suspicion of anything wrong.

After they had ordered dinner in the private room, and the waiter had gone, Pasquale got up from his chair and told Parrish not to look around, while he fixed something about his clothing. Parrish agreed laughingly, and even closed his eyes with his hands over them.

He stabbed Parrish so quickly that he did not have time to make a sound, and then hastily fled through the trap-door.

He had prepared for a trip to Europe,

and had given public notice that he was on an extended trip abroad.

He lived in the subterranean room for weeks, going out only at night for air, exercise and fresh supplies.

On the day he had met Parrish at the Ritz he had seen Rosita come into the lobby, and the way she looked at him convinced Pasquale that Mrs. Parrish had recognized him despite his disguise.

Le Deiur had given him work as a gardener without recognizing him and he thus secured air and exercise.

When he discovered that we were detectives he decided to end the strain on his nerves and swallowed a dose of poison, rather than suffer arrest.

Mrs. Parrish recovered from her shock, and begged us not let the world at large know about Jose Pasquale.

It was hard to refuse a woman whose life had been so sad.

Moreover Jerry fell in love with her and in due time she consented to take the name of Creton.

(The End)

FEDERAL AGENTS SEIZE BOGUS MONEY

WHAT Secret Service agents termed the biggest plot in years to flood the country with counterfeit $20 Federal Reserve Bank notes came to an end when agents raided a cottage at Bayport, L. I., completely equipped with counterfeiting material and seized $40,000 in bogus notes. Two women and eleven men were under arrest on charges of counterfeiting.

Besides the spurious notes, Secret Service Agent Joseph A. Palma, in charge of the raid, said he confiscated a press, apparatus for bleaching ink from genuine $1 bills—these to be used for printing the $20 notes—more than 1,000 bleached bills and a small arsenal.

Agent Palma led the raiders, Captain Gegan, head of the Bomb Squad; Sheriff Amza Biggs of Suffolk County and a squad of Secret Service operatives, to the house in South Country Road near Fairview avenue at 1 o'clock. The door was forced.

The four occupants, described as Mr. and Mrs. Marco Porcoro and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Massato, were arrested. Search revealed besides the money and other material, Agent Palma said, a revolver, two automatic pistols, a Winchester rifle and a pint bottle of nitro-glycerine.

By 6 o'clock the other alleged members of the gang were rounded up. Agents in Hartford, Conn., arrested Miner W. Pomeroy. Others in New Britain arrested Jacob Winkle.

The others were arrested in New York. They were booked as follows: Antonio Domingo, Bart Margrassa, Vincent Brancanto, Alfred Marone, Michael Vinci, Bigio Pollina and Forruno Cianflone.

Agent Palma said he and his men had been on the trail of the counterfeiters of the $20 note, "extremely dangerous because of its fine workmanship," for five months. The plate from which the notes were made was one of eight engraved by Salvatore Magiagone, who was sentenced to Atlanta Penitentiary for seven years for counterfeiing and passing spurious $20 notes, Agent Palma asserted.

He said seven of the plates were confiscated when Winkle was arrested.

According to the agent, the house, situated in well-kept grounds and of neat and comfortable appearance, was rented several months ago by the alleged gang, and one of his operatives since has lived in a house nearby, keeping under surveillance all who entered or left the place. He does not believe more than a dozen of the counterfeit notes have been circulated.

Postponed Justice

By GEORGE ETHELBERT WALSH

ACROSS the waste barrens of the north the hunter and hunted had been drifting, dodging, hiding and skulking like weird, unsubstantial shadows for a number of days and nights. Corporal McGinty had come upon the trail as far back as Mistassini, and had followed it with his usual bulldog persistency across the wide swamps and tundras, but not with his usual recklessness. He wanted to take his man alive, and he knew from hearsay that Garvin was a dead shot, absolutely fearless and as skillful in offense and defense as any Northwest Mounted Policeman of the Canadian force.

Back in the town of Roberval the fugitive Garvin had been accused of committing murder, a particularly brutal murder, which neither the law nor his friends could condone. The circumstantial evidence against him was so strong that lynching would have been his fate if he had not fled.

Len Garvin had drifted into the town one day, coming from the west, where he had been trapping, and that night he and Jim MacGregor, an old settler at Roberval with considerable property and money, had quarreled over some past misunderstanding.

There were plenty who could testify to the violence of their quarrel, including Rose MacGregor, and John Rutledge, factor and storekeeper and sometime partner of old MacGregor.

In the early dawn Factor Rutledge, accompanied by Rose, stumbled upon old MacGregor stabbed through the back.

Accustomed to all sorts of crimes in the frozen north where men sometimes lived and fought with almost primeval savagery, Corporal McGinty was not easily perturbed. But somehow the foul murder of MacGregor had stirred him mightily, and he began a chase for Garvin. He resolved to capture his man single-handed, and take him back alive to Roberval.

Just how much the white face of Rose MacGregor had to do with his determination he could not say, but certainly the memory of her stiffened his resolution and put new fire into his brain when the terrible inertia of the cold north seemed to paralyze mind and body. Over the corpse of her father she had pleaded with him to arrest the criminal, her eyes wide and staring, her face deathly white.

"I'll bring him back," he promised briefly.

"Dead or alive," the Corporal added vehemently.

"Alive!" she whispered. "Bring him back alive—not dead!"

Len Garvin was almost a stranger to him; they had met casually once or twice, and as he recalled the flashing eyes, the mocking smile, and the lean, handsome face, they were not those of a criminal or of one who would fight unfairly. Still one could not be too sure of such things. The greatest criminals in the world sometimes look as innocent as babes.

The Corporal was growing a little exasperated by the long chase. The cold and weariness were beginning to tell on him.

He had promised Rose MacGregor to bring his prisoner back alive, but nothing was said about crippling or wounding him. It would be a long, hard pull back to civilization carrying a wounded, helpless man, but the task was not hopeless.

At the next opportunity he shot to hit, not to warn or threaten, but the shot was aimed to cripple, if not to kill. It was a long-distance shot, but the light was good, and the target in plain sight. Corporal

McKinty smiled when he saw Garvin stumble and fall, lay there a moment, and then try to get up and drag himself along. One leg was wounded and bleeding profusely.

He picked up the blood trail after a while and followed his man.

Ordinarily the Corporal would have closed in, firing as he advanced if the other began, but his word to Rose MacGregor held him back. No, he couldn't arrest Garvin in a man-to-man fight. He would worry him as a cat would a mouse until human resistance weakened.

It came on the third day. Garvin had stumbled down a slippery declivity, wrenching the injured leg, and for a long time lay there as if unconscious. The Corporal approached warily, knowing his danger, but the outstretched arms of his victim did not move. With a sudden rush he covered the short distance and sprang upon his man.

What followed surprised and stupefied him. With a quickness and strength that took McGinty off his guard, Len Garvin locked his arms around the other's neck and began a desperate struggle to overpower him.

The man was built of iron and steel, and the Corporal felt his strength slowly ebbing before that terrific hold on his throat. Again and again he tried to summon his will to conquer, but in the end he dropped back weakly, and fought with feeble resistance.

When he came to his senses after what seemed an eternity of time, Garvin was dressing his wounded leg and smiling grimly at his trussed-up prisoner. Near by stood Corporal McGinty's horse, which Garvin had captured and tethered within reach.

"Hello!" greeted Garvin when the officer struggled. "Don't do that. It's a waste of energy, and we're both pretty near the end."

McGinty glared at him speechless with rage and mortification. "Surprised, eh?" grinned Garvin. "Wasn't looking for that little trick? Why in thunder did you hang back so long?"

He laughed harshly, his lean, tanned face drawn into lines of grim determination. He had the Corporal's guns, saddlebags, horse —everything, in his keeping, even his reputation, which is dearer to a member of the mounted police than life or earthy possessions.

After a while Len Garvin finished dressing his wound.

"Damn it, I oughta leave you here!" he growled, struggling to an upright position. "Don't know why I don't! You shot me."

Still grumbling and talking, he mounted the horse, forced the Corporal at the point of his gun to walk in front, hands and arms securely tied, but legs free. They traveled many miles that day, but in the opposite direction from home, penetrating deeper into the frigid tracts of the north.

But that night Garvin was half delirious with pain and fever.

"Damn you, Corporal, you think you'll get me yet!" he exploded. "You think this wound will break me!" He laughed harshly and added in surly tones: "But it won't!"

For a week, night and day, Garvin fought off the fever and delirium, watching his prisoner with sleepless eyes. They had stumbled upon an old shack, a relic of some earlier hunter or explorer, and made it their camp. Garvin was in no condition to go on.

On the eighth day, when the pain and swelling in his leg began to subside and his brain cleared, a new situation developed. It began snowing, not the soft, gentle downfall of warmer latitudes, but the hard, freezing and pelting flakes of the Arctic blizzard.

The blizzard lasted a week. When the sky cleared it smiled upon a world imprisoned in a blanket of white. Their small shack was half hidden from sight. Garvin had to clear away the drifted snow to open the door. He went outside and looked around, returning a few minutes later.

"Corporal," he said, squatting himself before his prisoner, "I reckon we can't get out before spring—not both of us, anyway. One of us mounted might do it, if the snow melts or packs down."

He grinned and drew from his pocket a couple of small twigs. "I'll give you your chance. One of us goes; the other stays. Short gets the choice. Draw!"

Corporal McGinty had the luck to draw the short twig. Garvin displayed no disappointment. "You can start out as soon as

you can get through. "I'll winter here by myself."

McGinty shook his head and spoke: "I can't do it. I came after you, and you got to go back with me."

He grinned, and the other nodded. So the matter was settled. They would both stay. Garvin made a shelter for the horse in the hut and scurried around to find food for all three. It was hard work, and after a toilsome forenoon on the third day he returned to the shack and flung himself down nearly exhausted.

"We'll starve at this rate," he growled. "It takes all a man's strength to find enough food for himself. I can't support you an' your horse, Corporal. All I could get was some lichen and moss for the animal and a house for ourselves."

McGinty nodded, but his eyes and face were impassive. "So," continued Garvin, "I propose we declare a truce for the winter. No shooting, no fighting, no trickery until cold weather's over, if I set you free. Is that understood, Corporal?"

The other nodded. Garvin cut his bonds and gave him his freedom. "There's your guns," he added. "Use 'em against anything but me until spring. Then we'll settle the old score between us."

There was a supply of fuel in the shack, and near by was a swamp where they could by dint of hard work dig out enough wood to keep from freezing. They built an additional shelter for the horse, which, with almost human appreciation, whinnied and rubbed his head against them.

Garvin had divided the ammunition evenly, as he did the food. It was a challenge of what might follow in the spring if one should use up his cartridges in advance of the other. His fairness impressed Corporal McGinty. He studied his man and began to like him.

"Garvin, you don't look or act like a bad man," he said one day. "Why'd you kill MacGregor?"

"Who killed him?" shouted Garvin, bridling up. "Are you a judge and jury as well as a policeman?"

He sneered and refused to talk further; Winter finally waned, and the soft winds of spring blew. The shadow that had been hovering over their lives began to take on a more menacing aspect. In a few weeks they would be released from their truce. What was to be the signal for the fight?

Garvin settled it one day when he came in from a hunting trip. There were signs of a coming thaw in the air. The cold would soon break, and the trail would open almost as suddenly as it had closed.

"In a week, Corporal, one of us can go!" Garvin said suddenly. "Spring is here. The thaw will begin in a few days."

The other nodded acquiescently. Garvin pulled the relics of an old calendar from his pocket and stabbed it on the wall with his jack-knife, running the blade through a number. He laughed good-naturedly.

"Friday, the thirteenth! That's unlucky, ain't it? Unlucky for one of us. Well," drawing in a deep breath, "that's the date. The truce ends at midnight. Understand?"

Corporal McGinty nodded. "I promised to take you back alive," he said, "and I'll do it!"

"That makes it harder for me," Garvin retorted. "I intended to shoot you, but——"

He stopped, glanced around, and then nodded and smiled. "Let it be with bare hands, then. If you won't kill, I can't. But why in hell did you make such a fool promise? Who'd you make it to?"

"Rose MacGregor."

Garvin started violently and peered sharply at him. "What for?" he grunted after a pause.

The Corporal hesitated, and then replied: "Woman-like, she wanted to give you the benefit of a fair trial, I suppose."

Thursday, the twelfth, arrived, clear, warm and spring-like. It was their last day of reprieve. At midnight they would be mortal enemies. Today they were friends. Already the snow and ice were melting and the rivers running in floods.

"We'll make our last hunting trip together, Corporal, if you say so," Garvin suggested. "We won't need our ammunition against each other. Come, we'll have a day of it."

The warm weather had brought game out plentifully, and they had a full day of it.

Garvin shot recklessly until his last cartridge was gone. "There!" he cried. "Now I'm in your power, Corporal! I've shot my last one."

He grinned as a sort of challenge, knowing that McGinty still had a number of cartridges left. "We agreed not to shoot each other," the Corporal replied. "I'll keep my annunition. I may need it on the way back."

They wrangled and talked good-naturedly, joshing each other like two friends, but behind it all was written deadly determination which neither was foolish enough to under-estimate.

They were restless all that day, chafing at the situation, watching the trail that now lay open to them.

They ate their noon meal outside and then sat smoking in front of the shack. Long stretches of silence fell between sentences. They were in no mood to talk. The Corporal finally got up. "I'll exercise Tom a bit," he remarked, referring to his horse. "He's soft and flabby, and needs hardening for the long trail."

"Sure! I'd thought of that myself," grinned Garvin. "You can exercise him for me. I'll start out early with him—at daylight perhaps."

McGinty smiled now, and remarked before riding away: "It would be a good idea, Garvin, to let Tom decide for us. He's fond of both of us."

"Suits me. But you've known Tom the longest. Shouldn't wonder if he'd choose you. Hardly fair, come to think of it—no, damn unfair! Ride along! I'll wait here!"

The Corporal in the saddle rode off and disappeared behind a slight rise in the monotonously level landscape. Garvin sat there for some time, smoking impassively. Then suddenly he started and grunted.

"Damn it! He may leave me!"

He got to his feet, but paused. Then he shook his head.

"'Tain't right! I won't let him do it. He can't make up any cock-and-bull story about losing me that they'd swallow. Got to go after him! Damn fine chap—can't let him be disgraced like that."

He seized his gun and started down the trail on a jog. The thought had struck him that Corporal McGinty had played a trick on him. Rather than face the ordeal he had fled. He had a good start on the trail now, and Tom was in fine fettle.

Muttering and grumbling half angrily, Garvin quickened his pace to a run. At that moment another horseman hove in sight.

The horseman coming up the trail suddenly caught sight of the familiar uniform of the Mounted Policeman, and with a jerk he brought his mount to a dead stop. Corporal McGinty raised a hand, either of salute or command, both perhaps, for it was the common practice of the grim guardians of the north to challenge every passer and demand his credentials. If he could give a good account of himself, they parted with friendly words; if not, trouble might ensue.

The stranger paused only for a moment; then he wheeled and started off at a hard gallop in the opposite direction. Corporal McGinty hailed him and started in pursuit. Then as if changing his mind, the strange horseman checked his mount and swung around in his saddle.

Neither the Corporal nor Garvin were prepared for what followed. With the quickness of an expert, the stranger whirled and fired, shooting point-blank at McGinty before the latter could draw. The first bullet went wild, but the second hit its target.

Corporal McGinty reeled in his saddle and began falling, but in that moment he acted with the precision and deadly accuracy of his kind. He shot deliberately, his aim going to the heart of the horseman.

Garvin saw both of them fall from their saddles. With a cry of rage he started in long, loping strides to the side of his friend. Tom stood quietly, a little puzzled and worried, gazing down at the inert figure on the snow.

"Corporal!" shouted Garvin when he reached the scene. The white face enraged him. He ran to the other man and turned him over.

He paused and stared with bulging eyes at the face of the dead man. "Rutledge.

the factor!" he added. "Now what does this mean?"

It was the factor and storekeeper at Roberval, John Rutledge, the one-time partner of MacGregor, the man who, with Rose MacGregor, had stumbled upon Garvin in the cabin staring down at the dead man. It was more their evidence than any one else's that had convicted Garvin of the crime. After the night's bitter quarrel, Garvin had stolen back into the cabin before dawn to apologize for his hasty words, and had stumbled upon the murdered man. Rutledge and Rose MacGregor had found him there, too dazed and stupefied to deny anything.

He was puzzled now. Words did not come easily. He turned the man over again to make sure he was dead. Then in a thoughtful mood he hurried back to the Corporal, who, when Garvin reached his side, showed signs of recovering consciousness.

"Now we can't fight it out!" was Garvin's greeting. "See here, Corporal, I believe you did that on purpose just to——"

"Did I get him?" asked McGinty, smiling up at him. "You know he shot at me without provocation."

"Sure you did! Plugged him through the heart. Damn skunk! But why—why—— Say, d'you know who it is?"

The Corporal shook his head.

"John Rutledge, the factor and storekeeper at Roberval."

Corporal McGinty frowned in an endeavor to think, but finding it too much for him he sighed and dropped back.

"I saw him shoot you," continued Garvin. "A dirty trick—the skunk! But why—why! Hey! Look a-here! What's this?"

Across the melting sea of snow came another horseman, riding easily, with his gun ready for action. He had Garvin covered before the flash of McGinty's uniform hit his eyes.

"All right!" Garvin growled. "I got 'em up!"

Sergeant Blacky of the Mounted Police rode up, and when he recognized Garvin he peered into his face, showing bewilderment and surprise. Corporal McGinty raised his head and saluted.

"Sergeant, I got my man," he said. "I was bringing him back."

"Sure he was!" nodded Garvin. "I was his prisoner. He got me all right!"

The newcomer eyed them curiously, a smile playing about his lips.

"Where's Rutledge?" he asked suddenly. "Have you seen him—John Rutledge, the factor of Roberval?"

"Sure; he's over there dead!" replied Garvin, pointing. "The corporal plugged him after the skunk shot him. Was you after Rutledge?"

The sergeant nodded and moved away in the direction of the dead man. "I've been trailing him for a week," he called over his shoulder. "Nearly had him twice."

"But—but what's he done?" called Garvin after him. "What's he wanted for?"

"Murder! He killed Jim MacGregor!" Then he rode away.

Ten minutes later the sergeant returned and found them impassively silent and motionless. Briefly as is the wont of the Mounted Police on official duty, he related the circumstances that had brought him so far north.

He had been trailing Rutledge, who fled when accused of killing MacGregor, and twice they had exchanged shots at a distance. In the excitement of the moment, when he saw Corporal McGinty, the fleeing man had evidently mistaken him for the sergeant, and shot to kill.

"But—but I thought I killed MacGregor!" blurted out Garvin suddenly. "Corporal McGinty said I did."

Sergeant Blacky smiled and shook his head. "You were cleared of that long ago. Rose MacGregor got a confession from Rutledge when he was drunk. She suspected him from the first, and when he asked her to marry him she led him on to his undoing."

Len Garvin turned and blinked down the snow-white trail, his face working strangely. What neither of the officers knew came back to him. Back in the States he had made love to Rose MacGregor and won her affections, but a quarrel with her father had

caused a separation. They had gone their ways, and had not met again until by accident that night of the tragedy.

Garvin had gone to MacGregor to plead for his daughter's hand, and a quarrel ensued. Late at night they had separated; then for love of the girl Garvin had returned to apologize.

He had entered the cabin while the body of his enemy was still warm and bleeding from the knife thrust, and Rose and John Rutledge had broken in and found him there. Rutledge accused him of the crime. Rose had said nothing, but her horrified eyes had seen enough. Garvin fled, leaving Roberval before dawn.

Now John Rutledge was dead, a self-confessed murderer!.

"Why'd Rutledge do it?" he asked abruptly, coming out of his reverie.

Sergeant Blacky smiled. "The usual motive. He had robbed MacGregor in a deal and the old man threatened to have him arrested. Then, too," shrugging his shoulders, "he wanted the old man's daughter."

"Damn him!" muttered Garvin.

Corporal McGinty staggered to his feet, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Why didn't you deny your guilt?" he demanded.

"If I did, you would not have believed me," retorted Garvin.

"Didn't I tell you I always got my man?" said McGinty. "Well, you're going back with me, Garvin, alive!"

"'Tain't midnight yet, Corporal. You wait and see! No, dammit, you've won! It's Friday the thirteenth, and one of us had to be unlucky. Well, I'll go peaceful-like."

CONVICT FINDS LIBERTY USELESS

THE police of Paris are occupied with the somewhat pathetic case of a convict who, having braved terrible hardships in escaping from the penal settlement of French Guiana, found that he could do nothing with his liberty, and, after having visited his mother, surrendered himself. The convict had already expiated his crime by serving a term of seven years' hard labor, to which he was sentenced, but the law provides that on completion of such a term a convict shall remain for an equal length of time in Guiana, where, though no longer actually a prisoner, he is kept under close supervision.

Gaston Pommier, aged 38, distinguished himself by his good conduct during his term of hard labor, but, growing impatient to see his aged mother, could not resign himself to spending seven more years in exile. Having bought a fishing-boat, therefore, he set out with six other men for Venezuela.

They were overtaken at sea by a terrible storm, which drove them on to an island of the British West Indies, where soon afterwards the captain of a British schooner offered to tow them within sight of the Venezulan coast, on condition that they handed over to him all the money and little treasures they possessed.

But when well out at sea, Pommier alleges, the captain cut the tow-rope and abandoned them to their fate, so that for eight days they drifted helplessly with their water and provisions almost exhausted. Eventually they reached Venezuela, where Pommier earned money in any way he could, and ultimately had saved sufficient to return to his home on the outskirts of Paris.

But here he could not get work, and was afraid to be seen in the daylight, as he had no papers of identity. He therefore surrendered himself at the Prefecture of Police, expressing the hope that his excellent record during his imprisonment, the hardships he had undergone, and his misfortune at the hands of a pirate might move the President to grant him a pardon. His case has been referred to a high legal authority for consideration.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

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156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.
161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.
162 "The Intriguers," by Grover Kidwell.
163 "The Lock and Key," by Hamilton Craigie.
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165 "The Heart on the Mirror," by Alexander Morrison.
166 "Mixed Motives," by Eric Howard.
167 "Southwest of the Law," by Hamilton Craigie.
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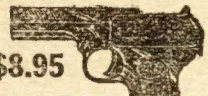

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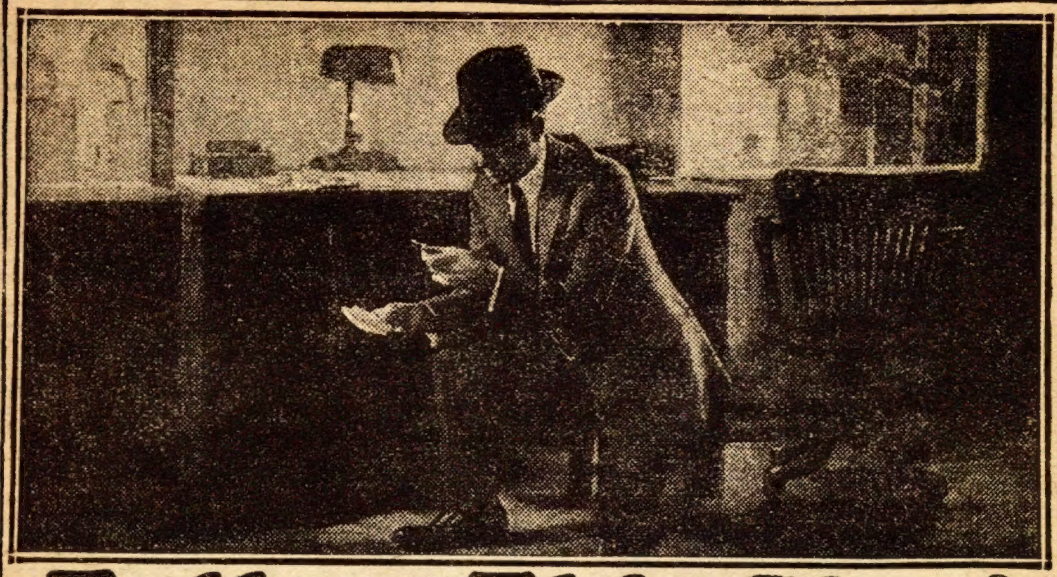

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